

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS


823

St38a^l

v.1

A L E C ' S B R I D E .

VOL. I.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

A L E C ' S B R I D E

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“ST. OLAVE'S,” “JANITA'S CROSS,”

&c. &c.

“Then Lancelot threw abroad his armour and said—‘Alas! who may trust this world?’”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1867.

The right of Translation is reserved.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL,
BLENHEIM HOUSE.

823

St 38al

v.1

CHAPTER I.

NOT many years ago—indeed it was the same year in which the Honourable and Reverend Adolphus Fitzmartin, Dean of St. Botolph, was consecrated to the bishopric of Ulphusby—a young girl might have been seen by any one passing through the Minster Close, seated at an upper window of one of those old grey stone houses whose latticed basements, mulioned and almost covered with vine or ivy, looked out over an expanse of green sward belted with fine old elm trees, to the north side of Ulphusby Minster.

Her name was Roda—Roda Montagu.

VOL. I.

B

Gen. Rev. Ray 12051
 Peckering 30,
 C. E. Fair-Johnson, 28 Nov. 1952

It was a pleasant, definite, sensible, straightforward name. With no Italian melliflence of vowel sounds about it, no German redundancy of unpronounceable consonants. An admirably compact little quintett of syllables, in which every one had its own distinctly recognizable use, and from which not so much as a single letter could have been removed without grievously marring the symmetry of the whole. A name in which prose and poetry blended like the leaves and flowers in a judiciously arranged nosegay, so that neither colour shall dazzle nor shade weary the eye which looks upon it. Not too beautiful for the ordinary wear and tear of week-day life, yet holding enough sweetness to make one linger lovingly over it. Equally removed from the dreamlike halo of romance which enshrines the Angelines and Evangelines and Clementines of olden story books, and that pain-

ful odour of earthliness which the Joans and Bet-tys and Abigails of this work-a-day world must needs carry wherever they go.

The owner of this pretty name presented an exact counterpart to it. She was a bright, active, intelligent looking girl, full of spirit and repressed energy; with all that careless overflow of life and vivacity which is so seldom seen except in a young, wealthy, well-born English maiden. In the course of a year or two she might put in a successful claim for the palm of beauty, but at the very immature age of fifteen and three quarters, few girls, especially girls brought up as Roda had been brought up in the quietness and seclusion of home life, apart from the forcing influences of fashionable schools and French governesses, have learned to display themselves to the best advantage, or have become so much as conscious of the charms which

slumber, like the unsunned buds of early spring, close folded within their sheltering leaves, ready to burst forth when the warm summer air of love shall breathe upon them and waken them into sweet fragrant life.

Perhaps, when little Miss Roda stood on the actual confines of that wonderful thing called "society," with but a few months or weeks between her and her first ball, and when she became studiously careful of that rose and lily complexion which, now, without so much as a thought of its preciousness, she exposed alike to sun, frost and wind, upon the Ulphusby moors; and when she woke up to a proper sense of the exceeding value of that coronal of wavy black hair whose troublesome superfluity of length and thickness she twisted up every morning into a huge shapeless *cob* at the back of her head, which *cob*, as the day wore on, and Roda took

her accustomed diet of skipping, swinging and racing in the garden, dissolved by degrees into an equally shapeless but more picturesque conglomeration of glossy ringlets, creeping away over her white neck and shoulders, quite down to her waist; "very viewly to look at," as old Fits, the gardener, used to say, beating his fancy creepers and wonderful Australian tendrill plants all to nothing, but ruinous to her best lace tuckers, as Malala, the more sensible laundress, affirmed, and making her light coloured muslin frocks "such a sight as never was";—and when over all the frank outspokenness of happy girlhood there began to float the veil of maidenly reserve, and with it the dawning consciousness of power and fascination, then perhaps Roda Montagu might be called beautiful; then perhaps she might manage to work mischief enough in a world which as yet had

taken but little heed of her or her beauty.

Still, though she is but an unfinished girl of sixteen, rather careless about her personal appearance, and with a fine appetite for bread and butter, of which she has not yet learned to be ashamed, Roda Montagu is worth looking at as she sits there in the casement window of her large, old-fashioned bed-room, gazing out over falling leaves and thinning elm-tree branches, to the black towers of Ulphusby Minster. Her elbows are on the oaken window-board, and her chin rests on her clasped hands. An ungainly attitude, since it jerks her head considerably out of the perpendicular, besides increasing the elevation of her nose, which has, without any such external helps, a sufficiently heavenward tendency. Indeed, if it were not for the brightness and regularity of the rest of her face, that *petit nez retroussé*

would be a serious hindrance to her prospects in life. But, as we have said before, Roda has not yet learned to make the best of herself, nor judiciously to restrain and keep in the background any little imperfections, physical or mental, which may prevent people from thinking so well of her as she deserves. She speaks just as she thinks; she acts just as she feels—two most pernicious habits for anyone to get into in the present state of society, where people of even the most ordinary wisdom or experience have found out and acted upon the discovery that thought and expression, feeling and action, are much better divorced; that if you feel a thing, the best course for you to take is to act as if you did not feel it; and if your thoughts go in one direction, to let your words go anywhere but after them. Roda will have to learn a wise

reticence in this, as in several other things, before she is many years older. She will come to the knowledge of it, perhaps, by a sort of instinct, just as she will by-and-by spring into the consciousness of her own charms, and begin to exercise them with all a maiden's coy caprice; or she will have to find it out, as others have found it out before her, by much painful experience, many a vexing stumble and disappointment, in the race for social happiness and well-being.

But what is Roda doing as she sits there, with her elbows on the window-board? Not crying, surely? Yes—a great tear has dropped on the oak panelling, and another and another, and now there is a bursting sob, and now, after a little pause, she has begun again, crying in right good earnest, as only girls of sixteen do cry, with utter disregard to red eyes next

morning, and swollen eyelids, and pale cheeks, and various other drawbacks to personal loveliness, which people of mature years are obliged to take into consideration before they can indulge in the luxury of unmitigated grief. Evidently it is not of the slightest consequence to her as she sits there, shaking with the violence of her emotions, whatever they may be, whether those blue eyes will ever win back their brightness, or whether those red, swollen lids will ever be white and transparent again ; or whether the round cheeks, wet and tear-stained now, shall some day dimple with smiles, and flush with the sweet kisses of the September breeze. She is just as unhappy as she can be ; her little heart is as full of trouble as it can hold, and that is all she knows.

Roda has been wanting to "have it out" in this impetuous fashion ever since noonday,

when the mixed express left Ulphusby for London, bearing away in a compartment of one of its first-class carriages an individual with whom just now we have not the slightest concern, but whose departure, nevertheless, makes all the difference in the world to Roda. Since the cab wheels crunched upon the gravel walk in front of the drawing-room window, and a wide-awake hat was waved in sign of farewell, just as the horse's head disappeared behind Mrs. Dexter's Gothic cottage at the west end of the Close, poor Roda has quite made up her mind that she shall never be happy any more in this world—never any more at all.

The sun may shine, but she is sure she shall never see any brightness in its shining; the blackberries on Ulphusby moor may swell into luxurious purple ripeness, she will not care to

gather one of them. Fits may bring her the downiest nectarines he can find on his south wall, they will be but dust and ashes in her mouth. Nay, even when the beautiful December frosts have come at last, and Ulphusby pool is just one sea of glass, and the Miss Ducannons and Miss Lesbanks, and all the rest of the Close girls are skating away in their tartan skirts and fur-bound hats, Roda knows as well as can be that *she* shall not care to join them. Her skating days are over now, and so are all the rest of the days wherein life could have any pleasure for her. She would about as soon die as not, she thinks, if she could do just as she likes.

She wanted to go away and cry just as she is crying now, as soon as the sound of the cab wheels had died out; but though, in general, Roda has a lamentable forgetfulness of conse-

quences, still she had enough foresight in this instance to remember that her music-master was coming at one o'clock, and, sitting close to her elbow during a whole long hour of Cramer's pianoforte studies, would not fail to notice her red eyes, and perhaps ask what she had been crying about—which inquiry she was sure would make her begin again worse than ever. And then when the music-lesson was over, there came the daily walk with Aunt Phillis, and then dressing, and then dinner; and this afternoon the Miss Duncannons were coming in to do leather work with her; and there would be the long evening, in which, if her papa did not have anyone come to play chess with him, he would want to hear some of her new songs, and perhaps expect her to say one or two Latin verbs, just to keep her from forgetting all about them. No, she must be as patient as she could, and think as

little as possible about that mid-day express to London, or the crunching of the cab wheels, or the waving of the wide-awake hat, until the Minster clock struck ten, and Stubbs brought in the candles, after which Aunt Phillis used to say, "Now, Roda, my dear," and then she was expected to pack up her work, give her papa and aunt their customary good-night kisses, and go to bed.

A dismissal which she received on this occasion with unwonted readiness; and although now the Ulphusby clocks are just upon the stroke of eleven, she is still sitting there with her chin on her hands, as aforesaid, crying as though all the brightness of her life lay behind her. In fact, she does really, seriously think that she is never again going to be happy any more. Through those blinding, fast falling tears, she cannot see any sunshine, any joy-

ousness beyond. She does not know that when a few days have worn away, she will be very nearly, if not quite, as bright as ever. She does not know that this, her first grief, which now seems so hopeless, will by-and-by find its level, as all other griefs do ; and its rugged outlines, now so terribly black and sharp, will be overflowed by the ever rising tide of her young life's hopes and enjoyments. Roda would be very angry if you were to tell her so, for people never like to think they can "get over" anything easily ; but it is a fact, nevertheless, that by to-morrow night those red eyelids will have got back all their snowy whiteness, and the morning after she will be racing as usual with Jeff and Lily in the garden, and by next week at this time she will be able to listen to the shrill whistle of the mid-day express

without feelings amounting to anything like agony. When the blackberries on Ulphusby moor have begun to ripen into purple softness, they will be gathered by none so merry as herself; and long ere the December frosts have crisped that skating pool, almost covered now with the falling leaves of Autumn, she will be looking up those dainty little skates of hers, and having them roughed ready for use, as soon as her papa shall have time to escort her to the scene of action. For at sixteen no sorrow is incurable, and no grief cuts so deep that after-joy cannot heal the wound.

So leaving her to find out this blessed truth for herself, we will go back a few years along that chain of things and circumstances whose latest link finds Roda Montagu weeping over her first great grief in that stone-mullioned

ivy-bound window, which looks out, past elm trees and green sward, to the towers of Ulphusby Minster.

CHAPTER II.

RODA lived with her father, Dr. Montagu, and her maternal aunt, Miss Phillis Chickory, in a stately old-fashioned house, consisting chiefly of high pitched gables and very tall twisted chimneys, which, snugly sheltered by trees as old as itself, and nearly covered with vine and ivy, stood in a quiet corner towards the north end of the Minster Close. The house was formerly occupied by the Deans of Ulphusby, but of late years a very grand new residence had been built for them near the College, on the other side of the Minster. Dr. Montagu's house, however, still retained

its name of the Old Deanery, and a real pleasant homelike-looking place it was.

Dr. Montagu matched his house almost as exactly as his daughter Roda matched her name. He was a portly, well-built, fair-complexioned, good-tempered man of fifty, blessed with an easy disposition, a considerable interest in the funds, good natural abilities, and a fine talent for making a comfortable thing of life. Not, however, that he made a comfortable thing of it at the expense of other people's comfort, or that he lived to too great an extent in the basement of his nature, to the neglect of its upper stories. On the contrary, he was a frank, honourable man, even scholarly so far as the Classics were concerned, quite popular amongst the College dons and professors, who certainly would not have fraternized with him as they did, if he had not borne

a fair character for learning and gentlemanhood. But he was one of those easy-going men upon whom nothing makes a very deep impression. He took life easily—got out of it what comfort, enjoyment, luxury, it could give, and let the rest go by. He never troubled himself about politics, never got excited when there was an election, or went into mourning over the dissensions which reft the Church of which he was a minister. He had no doubt that things would all come right in the end; at any rate, if they did not, his position would be no worse for it. Disappointment, when it came to him—and of course he had to take his share of it now and then, like other men—he looked upon as an unlucky chance, a thing to be got over as soon as possible; not in any sort a discipline, or means of moral purification or chastening, sent for the purpose of making

him a better man than he was before. Indeed, perhaps one of the last thoughts that ever entered Dr. Montagu's mind, was that he needed any sort of moral purification, or that his internal spiritual economy would be improved by any such cleansing and re-modification as chastening or discipline is supposed to produce. He *had* had his troubles—one of which was the loss of his wife, many years ago—but he did not look at them from a spiritual point of view. He took them as farmers take a bad harvest, or tradesmen a slow season, or as a well-bred lady takes the spilling of something over her best satin gown—things that could not be helped, and need not be fretted over.

Dr. Montagu held some trifling preferment in the Cathedral, so trifling that the emoluments of it scarcely covered the expense of the needful canonical vestments, to say nothing of fur-

nishing him with those mysterious appendages of clerical attire which, under the auspices of advanced Ritualists, had lately crept into use in some of the more fashionable churches of Ulphusby.

To supplement this almost nominal preferment, which, indeed, did little more than give him access to the most select ecclesiastical society of the place, Dr. Montagu held the head-mastership of the Ulphusby Grammar School—a lucrative post, and an easy one also, since the undermasters did the principal part of the teaching, leaving little for the nominal head but to walk through the rooms now and then, by way of identifying himself with the concern, and sometimes to hear the recitations of the elder boys. Certainly the head-master might do a great deal more than this if he were so disposed, and possibly a very painstaking, con-

scientific man would have felt it incumbent upon him to take a little of the actual routine duty upon his own shoulders; but Dr. Montagu was not a man who saw any merit in works of supererogation, and as in Ulphusby Cathedral the higher its officials were paid the less they did, why should not Ulphusby Grammar School, whose foundation was coeval with that of the Cathedral, follow the same division of labour? At any rate, Dr. Montagu followed it, and no one found any fault with him for doing so, except perhaps the under-masters, who might grumble a little at their long hours and short profits; but then, as the grumbling never came to head-quarters, it did the Doctor no harm.

When, twenty years ago, he left the small country living of Marsly-in-the-Dales to take the head-mastership of the Ulphusby Grammar-School, and that very microscopic preferment

in the Cathedral, he brought his bride with him, a Scottish lady. She was a pretty, amiable little woman, with a sweet face and a handsome fortune, but she died when their only child Roda was two years old, and Dr. Montagu had never married again. He buried her in the south aisle of the Minster, amongst all the crumbling Deans, Canons, Prebends, and other ecclesiastical functionaries, and erected a tasteful tablet over her remains, wherein it was stated that she departed this life sincerely loved and deeply lamented. Both of which statements were quite correct, for he did indeed love his wife better than he loved any other woman, and he felt very sorry when she was taken away from him. But if his love had been wise and tender in proportion to its sincerity, the lamentation would never have been needed.

Mrs. Montagu was a gentle affectionate woman, not so largely gifted with intellectual abilities, or the faculty of household management, as with a longing for love in its full unrestrained manifestation. She was fond, too, as gentle, weak-natured women often are, of delicate little attentions, and much outward deference; whereas Dr. Montagu, bluff, hearty, good-tempered, but completely unperceptive, had no notion of any attentions beyond giving his wife plenty of pin-money, buying her a handsome bonnet now and then, and bestowing on her a hearty kiss when he went away to the school in a morning. In return for which attentions he expected that his home should be well-managed, his personal comforts religiously cared for, and his table supplied with all the successive good things which were in season from January to December.

Here, alas! Mrs. Montagu failed. To put her deficiencies in the mildest possible form, she was not a paragon of a housekeeper. She could embroider him fancy braces by the dozen; she could cover the walls of his study with poonah paintings; she could adorn his head with velvet smoking caps, and his feet with bead slippers; and if crochet doylies, and napkin rings of Berlin work, and netted fish serviettes, and elaborate decorations for the knuckle ends of legs of mutton, could have been considered as sufficient table comforts, then no table was more richly supplied than that of the old Deanery.

But, unfortunately, Dr. Montagu required something more substantial. He did not care for netted serviettes if the fish upon them were done to rags, and the most splendid rosette of crochet work that his wife's fingers ever manu-

factured could not compensate for the imperfect cooking of the leg of mutton which it garnished. Mrs. Montagu did her best, poor thing, but the mysteries of domestic science were too much for her. She was conquered by them, as many a loving but unpractical wife has been conquered before. And since she had not energy enough to strive against her difficulties, she was fain to let things take their course, and just hope that some day the knowledge would come to her, as the capacity for building its nest does to the robin.

Dr. Montagu did not turn unkindly upon his wife when she thus failed in her part of the matrimonial bargain. He was too good-natured to be intentionally unkind to anyone. But as he could not have things comfortable at home, he saw no harm in having them comfortable elsewhere—more especially as he gave his wife

pin-money as heretofore, bought her as many bonnets as she wanted to wear, and never omitted taking an affectionate leave of her when he set off for the grammar-school, except when she was not downstairs in time to receive it; and in other ways conducted himself unexceptionably enough, with this one little drawback, that his best, brightest life was no longer lived at home.

Mrs. Montagu knew that. It does not need a woman of bright intelligence or very quick perceptions to find out that she has ceased to content a nature which never had anything in common with her own. She knew the cause. Perhaps, also, she knew how she could have removed it. But she was too fond of ease, and the roots of self-indulgence had struck themselves too far down into her nature for her to arouse herself, and win back what she now

felt it was a grievous mistake ever to have lost. So, being too loving and too hungry for love to bear its loss, she did what, under the circumstances, was the best thing she could have done—she slipped quietly away to that other world, where, let us hope, the sins and short-comings of this would be forgiven her.

She “fell into delicate health,” as the phrase goes. People began to speak of her as “Mrs. Montagu, poor thing!” when they saw her, with white face and weary step, loitering on sunshiny afternoons in the sheltered walks of the old garden at the north side of the Close. Then she was seen no more out of doors, and passers-by only caught a glimpse of her very rarely, propped up with pillows in an easy-chair at one of the mullioned windows. At last, after a tedious illness, “borne,” as the masons, under Dr. Montagu’s direction, carved

upon her funeral tablet, "with uncomplaining fortitude," she died. But for a woman who has seen the one hope of her life slowly depart from her, never to return again, even a tedious illness, with the good deliverance of death beyond it, is not the hardest trial of fortitude she has had to bear.

It was to nurse her sister through this same tedious illness that Miss Phillis Chickory, the kind, good, unselfish maiden aunt of the family, was sent for, and came to the Old Deanery after the doctors had pronounced Mrs. Montagu's disease to be beyond remedy. And so well was her trust fulfilled, so well did she guide the domestic machinery, which had got into sad disorder during poor Mrs. Montagu's feeble administration, so admirably did she meet the Doctor's views in the arrangement of his table, and the management of his

personal comforts, and other matters which were of considerable importance to him, that when all was over, and the sincerely lamented but incompetent wife was deposited in her final resting-place amongst the departed dignitaries of Ulphusby Cathedral, her husband, finding that he could now have things comfortable at home, thought he could not do better than ask Miss Chickory to remain with him, and undertake, in addition to her other responsibilities, the charge of his little motherless daughter, Roda, a pretty, black-haired, mischievous child of two years old; very like her poor dear mamma in beauty and affectionateness, but like her in nothing else. For Miss Roda was a restless, impetuous, energetic little scrap of mortality, full, even at that tender age, of fun and tricks and nonsense, running over with eager activity, quickly roused to passion, as quickly soothed by love

and tenderness ; a child who, as the old nurse said, "took a vast of managing," but who, if only she *was* properly managed, would more than repay all the trouble in a noble, earnest, loveable womanhood.

So Miss Chickory staid, and was unto the child as a mother. Nay, perhaps, as the slow years wore on, Roda gained from Aunt Phillis much more than that weak, gentle, ease-loving mother could have given her. For Miss Chickory, to a heart equally winning and affectionate as her sister's, joined a clear head and an active right hand, and beyond these, that rare unselfishness which ever sets the interests of others before its own. She was a straightforward, practical woman, with a singular simplicity about her, seldom met with in connection with so much energy and administrative skill as she possessed.

People, especially the rather stuck-up, exclusive people of the upper circles of Ulphusby society, used to smile at her primitive ways, and call her, long before she had passed the bounds of middle life, "that dear old Miss Chickory." But they never added "poor thing" to her name, as they used to Mrs. Montagu's, for there was a serene, motherly composure of love about her, and a warm, sunny geniality, not unmixed with dignity in all her ways, which only those win whose lives are fulfilled from some far hidden spring of quiet content.

Roda's aunt was one of those simple, sweet-hearted women, of whom the world takes little heed until they leave it; and then, for the first time, it feels how precious was the work they did. She was not greatly gifted; she had no lofty aspirations, no splendid longings, whose continual unfulfilment wrote its sad story on

her face. She had long ago learned the wisdom—than which the very greatest philosopher on earth can find no greater—of doing the duty which lay nearest to her, and trusting for light, when that was done, to see the next. The duty that lay nearest to her now was to keep her brother-in-law's house, see that he was made comfortable, and adapt herself to any little selfishnesses with which time and circumstance might have encrusted his character, though perhaps even these did not appear to her as others would have regarded them. For it is only the selfish who are quick to see or be annoyed by selfishness in those about them ; the generous nature thinks all others like itself.

She was also to be a mother to the child Roda, to teach her her duty to God and her neighbour, so far as her own simple ideas of duty,

and the ever shining light of a pure example, could teach that great lesson.

Then beyond these, the nearer interests of her life, there were poor people about her into whose dark days she could put a little gleam of brightness, and sad sick hearts to whom gentle words of hers might bring some touch of healing. To the doing of these things with such skill as she possessed, Aunt Phillis gave her whole life ; and in the doing of them, though not in the trusting to them, she found what many of her more brilliantly gifted sisters seek after in vain—perfect peace.

Thus, though she was first and best to no one, though it was her lot to be but one among many to those she loved, having no friend, man or woman, in all the wide world to whom she was bound by a 'tie so close that none closer could ever come in its place, her life was not a

wasted life, not nearly so much wasted as that of the dead wife, around whom once the love of both husband and child had gathered. For she was at least going on her way brightly and cheerfully, holding up her little light with unwearying hand, scarcely knowing, perhaps, how many feet it guided, or how many weary travellers it comforted.

That good womanly heart of hers might not be a very great one; perhaps it did not take very much, only the power of doing good to others, to fill it. Doubtless her name would never be known, her influence never felt, far away from that little household, whose light and comfort she had been since the day she came to it. But still, if every woman did her duty as faithfully, and trimmed her little lamp as constantly, as Aunt Phillis did, not murmuring that the duty was so mean, or the lamp so tiny,

there would be less stumbling in the world, less crying out for light, fewer complaints over the darkness and dreariness of the way.

Once only, every year in the Autumn, Miss Chickory used to go away for a month to visit her friends in Scotland. Those were dark days for the Old Deanery people. The warmth and sunshine seemed to have gone out of the house. Roda moped about from morning to night in the great quiet rooms, which looked so empty when Aunt Phillis's bright face and cheery voice were away. And Dr. Montagu, as he came home evening after evening to the fireside which no thoughtful care of hers had made comfortable for him, used to say, as he hunted for his cold slippers, and took up the damp uncut paper,

“The house does not seem like home without her.”

Truly, any woman of whom that can be said,
may well be content.

CHAPTER III.

ULPHUSBY was a very stupid place, notwithstanding its great reputation for learning. Its quaint old college buildings, whose tall gables, black-timbered and smoke-dried, loomed up beneath the south front of the Minster, might be famous forcing-houses for theology and logic ; but they, or to speak more correctly, the professors who prelected within their sacred precincts, did not always temper these excellent studies with that wide charity which leaves to all people the right of private judgment. And though the grey-haired, silken-robed dons and doctors who loitered about in

those dingy quadrangles, were deeply skilled in Greek and Hebrew roots, they had not by any means cultivated with so much care those other roots, which, striking into the heart of man, and not his intellect, bring forth the sweet fruits of peace and good-will towards all. Perhaps within that one square mile of the Queen's dominions which Ulphusby-proper covered, there was more theological wrangling and contention, more clamouring for individual rights, more setting up of party standards, and vigorous pulling down of them by the opposite party, than in any other city of the same exceedingly limited importance. Certainly, if more exclusiveness and sectarianism and narrow-mindedness could have been found elsewhere, the place where these enemies of social progress defended their position with greater tenacity than at Ulphusby, was to be pitied.

Of course, being a collegiate town and a cathedral town too, it was decidedly ecclesiastical in its tendencies, and no one who did not duly attend the service of his parish church had any prospect of being welcomed within the pale of gentility, or of being called upon by anyone whose acquaintance was worth having. Truly there was room enough for all reasonable latitude of private opinion within the arms of the gracious mother, out of whose embrace eternal safety, or, at any rate, present respectability, was next to impossible. All the three recognised divisions of the English Establishment had their representatives more or less numerously spread over the fifteen parishes of Ulphusby; and so, if a resident in the place could find no rest for the sole of his foot, religiously speaking, in any of these generally accepted departments of the body ecclesiastic,

so much the worse for him, as in that case he must wander into the unconsecrated limbo of Dissent, and be debarred for ever from all the privileges and immunities of a good position in society.

Ritualism held its head tolerably high in Ulphusby, the present Bishop being a man whose sympathies, though somewhat hesitatingly expressed, were decidedly in favour of eucharistic vestments and daily communion. However, he had not as yet taken a sufficiently firm stand in the foremost ranks of the High Church party, to establish it upon an enduring basis in the place.

Its most worthy representative was Mr. Ambrose, the incumbent of St. Chad's, a noble, faithful, self-denying man, yet having withal a touch of mysticism in his disposition, and a keen spiritual sense, which looked through

outward rite and symbol to the interior truth which these are intended to shadow forth. He was a scholar and a gentleman, very active amongst his poor people; more skilful, perhaps, in winning their affections than in rendering himself popular with the fashionable part of his congregation, with whose blind, undistinguishing love for pomp and ceremony, merely as such, he had little sympathy, and between whom and himself the natural sensitive reserve of his temperament seemed to place an insurmountable barrier. He loved better to sit in his study, pondering upon the duties of the church to the world, or to go out and practise those duties among the poor outcasts in the disreputable courts and alleys of his parish, than to seek much intercourse with his more brilliant and fashionable adherents, who, as he sometimes felt

bitterly enough, only gathered round Ritualism for the sake of its splendidly-mounted standard, and not for the truth which those who worthily bore that standard sought to teach.

But if the poor people came to Mr. Ambrose, the rich ones found their spiritual needs abundantly supplied in the ministrations of the Rev. Marcus Fabian, lately appointed curate, or, as he preferred to term himself, assistant priest, in the church of St. Chad's. He had obtained this appointment chiefly through the interest of his sister, Mrs. Dexter, widow of one of the late resident canons, who, with her three young children, lived upon a comfortable annuity in St. Ninian's Lodge, a neat little Gothic cottage at the north end of the Close, scarcely a stone's throw from the Old Deanery, with whose occupants she was on terms of familiar intimacy. Indeed, the interchange of

visits between them had of late become so frequent, that certain ill-natured people hinted at ulterior purposes on the part of Mrs. Dexter, and some were even bold enough to affirm that had Dr. Montagu seen things in the same light as the Canon's widow, the Old Deanery would long ago have welcomed a new mistress, and "dear old Miss Chickory," as Mrs. Dexter called her, have journeyed home again to her friends in the north. But that might only be gossip, for it was well known that the Close people had a fine talent for discovering motives, and commenting upon them, not always to the credit of the parties interested. And even if Mrs. Dexter did sometimes look at that pleasant old mullioned-windowed house at the north end of the Close, and think what a very suitable home it would make for herself and her three children,—and if she did now and then turn over

in her mind the possibility of becoming Mrs. Montagu number two, and transferring such pieces of her furniture as should be suitable into those fine oak-panelled rooms,—that was only what many another lady in Ulphusby had done before her, even the very ladies who were so hard upon her for doing it.

The Rev. Marcus Fabian was a clerical exquisite of the first water. Well born, well bred, of inimitably persuasive manners and winning address, possessing an almost unbounded capacity of insinuating himself into the unappropriated female heart, he completely supplemented the deficiencies of his austere, reserved incumbent, and supplied what Mr. Ambrose's finer, more spiritual nature could never make him competent to become, a rallying-point for the fashionable young ladies of the congregation—a visible, ever-present idol, on whom they

could expend their superfluous adoration, and for whose bland smiles and delicately manifested preferences they were willing to exchange almost any amount of labour in the embroidering of church garments, or the management of Easter, Whit-tide, and Christmas decorations.

For certainly the most fearless and out-spoken, if not the most able champions of primes, nones, and vespers in Ulphusby, were the young ladies of the upper classes, chiefly fresh from Parisian conventual schools; of much leisure, considerable pin-money, and large vanity. Perhaps the requirements of Ritualism supplied them with an outlet for that natural activity which, in a more vivacious town, would have worked itself off in attendance upon lectures, concerts, soirees, balls, and other public amusements, painfully infrequent in Ulphusby, or which, had they belonged

to the lower middle ranks of society, would have found a wholesome outlet in commonplace household duties.

At any rate, the daily services, as performed with much chanting of surpliced choristers at the fashionable church of St. Chad's, absorbed many a weary hour which would otherwise have been yawned away over morning calls; and the embroidering of stoles and chasubles, the designing of monograms for altar-cloths, and the elaborating of book-cushions for the epistolers and gospellers, put a temporary stop to that mighty tide of slippers and bead braces which from time immemorial has set in towards popular incumbents or pet curates.

Then, too, it was "the thing" to be ritualistic. It was wonderful how rapidly high churchism spread in the small city of Ulphusby, when one or two of the leading belles had

openly avowed their approval of its outward observances. Bowing and turning towards the East became universal at all available parts of the service. The congregation of St. Chad's, which consisted chiefly of ladies, began to assume the appearance of a gaily coloured flower-bed, swept at regular intervals by a gentle breeze, which, passing over it, bent its bright blossoms almost to the ground, and, ere they had time to recover themselves, exacted the graceful homage again; then suddenly veering round swept them in an opposite direction,—and so kept them continually undulating, until some authoritative "*oremus*" bowed the entire parterre of brilliant perfumed blossoms, and kept it low. A lady who wished to be genteel, could be it at once by becoming ritualistic. It was such an inexpensive way of linking herself with the best society of the place.

Young ladies of small means and lofty aspirations,—and there were many such in the St. Chad's congregation,—might not be able, except by considerable self-denial in other matters, to vie with Mrs. Dexter's bonnets, new two or three times a year from Paris, or to imitate, save at a very remote distance, her untold variety of mantles and flounced silk dresses; but the genuflexions could be done for nothing, and a regular attendance on primes, nones, and vespers, whilst marking those who observed it as decidedly people of *ton*, was by no means costly to any one who had plenty of leisure time on her hands. Indeed the only expense it involved was a subscription, perhaps once or twice a year, when those who had been thus regular in the use of their means, and might therefore be considered as dutiful daughters of the Anglican Church, were waited upon by

the leading ladies of the parish,—whose notice was in itself an honour worth almost any money, —and solicited on behalf of a velvet altar cloth, or a complete and more elaborate set of vestments for the officiating clergy.

Thus, many who could never understand the true spirit of High Churchism, nor see through its symbolism the meaning of the thing symbolised, adhered to these things simply because they were fashionable, the shibboleth of a party which could lift them a step or two higher in the social scale, and give them the privilege of bowing acquaintance with people who, had they belonged to a simple nonconformist faith, would have thought scorn even to look upon them.

Then there was the Low Church party, not a very important party in Ulphusby, as neither the Bishop, Dean nor any of the leading cathedral dignitaries, professed much sympathy with

its peculiar views ; but a party nevertheless, by whom much, perhaps most, of the real hard work which got done in many of the parishes, was accomplished. These were the people who never made any genuflexions at all, even abolishing the time-honoured obeisance in the second division of the Apostles' Creed, never turned to the East at stated parts of the service, never had their churches decorated, never wore anything but the most legitimate and universally recognised articles of ecclesiastical attire, and looked upon copes, albs, and chasubles as dangerous innovations, the first indications of that Romanising tendency which would never rest until it had brought back into the vestry of every parish church in the land the entire wardrobe of the Man of Sin. People hard to be convinced that their own was not the only way of safety under heaven, yet thoroughly honest

and painstaking and sincere, doing with vigorous faithfulness what they esteemed to be right, and only needing sometimes a little more charity towards those who held what they thought to be wrong. Earnest in their defence for the truth, yet slow to see that truth has many sides, and that, with such visual organs as Providence has given to most christian people, the whole, or even the greater number of those sides cannot by any possibility be seen together. Narrowing the way of life perhaps more than the Great Master himself has narrowed it, yet never pointing out to others any toil or self-denial which they were unwilling themselves to undertake, or preaching a higher standard of Christian practice than they laboured truly and faithfully to set forth in their own example.

Then, looking with equally kindly toleration and indifference upon the very Low Church

party, with its unadorned services and Calvinistic tenets, and the very High Church party, with its eucharistic vestments and unlighted candles, were the Broad Church people, not as yet very numerous in Ulphusby, consisting almost entirely of a few Professors belonging to the different colleges, rather learned men, who had travelled much and seen a good deal of the world, and who, insisting on the right of private judgment for themselves, were willing to extend it to others. Very few ladies in Ulphusby sided with the Broad Church party,—partly because it was not considered fashionable, no person of any distinction having expressed her sympathy with its peculiar theological views; and partly because it held forth no material attractions to the feminine taste, lacking the pomp and ceremony and prestige of the ritualistic party, and the fine

opportunities for social intercourse afforded by the numerous Low Church working meetings and bazaars.

The Ritualists openly expressed their belief that the Broad Church people were doing more harm than good in the world. But then the Broad Church people in their turn said the same of the Ritualists; and each of them, Broad Church and Ritualists, joined in a similar verdict against the Evangelicals, who, nowise tardy in self-defence, said that not they, but the two other parties, were doing the harm. So that if any one of the three spoke the truth—and it would be very wrong to think that they could do anything else—the Church altogether was not doing very much good in the world. At any rate, it was not such a burning and shining light, even according to its own showing, as it ought to be.

But, however much they might disagree amongst themselves concerning their respective merits, there was, at any rate, one point upon which these three parties, High Church, Broad Church, and Low Church, could unite on one common standing ground; namely, hearty reprobation of that outlying conglomerate of sects, Nonconformist, Wesleyan, Baptist, Anabaptist, Presbyterians, Moravians, Plymouth Brethren, or whatever name they might call themselves by, which, under the general head of Dissent, they sought to sweep from the surface of polite society—sought to sweep it thence with besoms of various sizes, and handled with various degrees of vituperative energy, but always heartily and unanimously.

The Dissenters were to the Low Church what the Low Church itself was to the advanced Ritualists. Nay, worse, for the Evangelicals,

though living sadly below their privileges in the matter of genuflexions and eucharistic vestments, and being but very unworthy children of a noble mother, were, by virtue of that common motherhood, invested with a sort of distant relationship to the more dutiful sons of the Church, and might therefore be treated with the careful, pitying toleration which is due to an erring but not hopelessly reprobate brother. But the Dissenters had neither part nor lot in the great religious system of the land. The utmost reach of charity that could be extended to them was the faint hope that somehow they might be saved, and find their way into some remote corner of the heavenly Canaan; or linger, scarcely recognised, upon the skirts of that great multitude, the blessed company of the faithful, who had been baptised into the true church, and followed its teachings, and meekly

bowed themselves beneath the yoke of its supreme authority.

The Dissenters of Ulphusby, too, on their part, knowing how deeply rooted was this *animus* against them, and feeling how very flimsy was that outward show of good-will, which at chance meetings, where ministers of all denominations met together, was extended to them, looked with resolute, defiant glance from their unconsecrated Bethels and Ebenezers to the gorgeous cathedral and the beneficed churches which held within their coffers so much of the country's wealth. Silently for the most part, but with much unexpressed bitterness, these two classes regarded each other, as the strong, stout-limbed labourer, the keen, clear-headed artificer, and the skilful mechanic, upholders together of the greatness and strength of this land, look across the great gulf of caste

to the white-handed gentry and nerveless aristocrats who make laws for them, impose taxes upon them, and live at ease upon the produce of their labour.

Theirs was the muscle and the strength, theirs the earnest heart and the active right hand, which, thrusting down the lever of a boldly preached gospel, spoken in the people's own tongue, into many a rude lawless home, had lifted it into order and concord and purity. Theirs was the burning love, which, fearing no danger, and dreading no death, had crossed the wide ocean to foreign lands, there to hold up over the rough ways of life, some light of heavenly truth to lost and groping souls. Theirs was the energy which, in years gone by, had stirred this sleeping England, and roused her to a new wholesome religious life, giving her spirit instead of form, and the living

soul instead of the dead letter. Yet here, in this ancient seat of learning—in a city which owed its very existence to the desire of some pious soul to spread light into a dark world—they, the loving, earnest-hearted ones were politely thrust aside, held at arm's length, denied a common brotherhood by those stoled and surpliced ministers of the church who should have welcomed them as its truest friends, who should have recognised in them the faithful doers of a work which themselves had failed to accomplish, a work which, perhaps, it was not now in their power ever to do so effectually as these would have done it for them.

It was not a chance compliment now and then at some public gathering, followed next day by a studiously averted look in the more public streets—not a hurried coalition entered into for mutual interest at election times or

cholera visitations, and then scattered to the winds when the favourite member was returned, and the epidemic driven away, which could heal that deep-lying grievance.

The people who would once have given back love for love, now set themselves to give back neglect for neglect. If the Church gathered aside its garments and looked coldly upon the Dissenters, the Dissenters in their turn, upon their broad, firm, ever-strengthening standing-ground of common-sense activity, drew more closely together, and looked with increasing indifference across that gulf which not their own will had first made. They had their work to do, too,—perhaps a work as great as that of the stoled and surpliced priests who refused to look upon them as other than heretics and schismatics. Time, which adjusts all things, would adjust their rights by-and-by.

And upon all this strife, this reaching out of individual prides and pettinesses, the God of love looked down, waiting patiently until these, His children, brothers and sisters of one great family, should learn to forget their little private interests, should lay aside their pitiful jarrings, their envies and jealousies, and clasping hands, pray together to their Father in heaven ; Father alike of high and low, rich and poor, learned and simple ; who, so only the prayer be sincere, looks not whether it rises from gorgeous minister or lowly meeting-house ; who, if the heart be reverent towards Himself, loving towards its fellows, cares not whether it beats beneath alb of priestly ministrant or smock of hard-handed labourer.

Truly, if that great All-Father gave to us only as we give to each other, those streets of gold on which we some day hope to tread would

echo with few footsteps, and the crowns which we dream of wearing when our work is done, would lie for ever—though not of our casting there—before His throne.

CHAPTER IV.

YET, if anyone could have swept away—just as each of the church parties wished to sweep the other two away, and as the united three of them wished to sweep the Dissenters away—that spirit of sectarianism and exclusiveness which prevailed in the upper and middle ranks of society, and brought in its stead a kindly feeling of toleration between class and class, Ulphusby might have been a comfortable place to live in. Noting in what narrow, sharply defined channels its tide of social life flowed, one could not help wishing that some vigorous, large-hearted reformer would rise up

and slacken that weary code of etiquette which said to the well-bred church lady, respecting her equally well-bred next-door neighbour of Dissenting principles—"Thou shalt in no wise call upon her;" or to the retired lawyer of ritualistic tendencies, and the Evangelical doctor who met daily at their club or news-room—"Ye shall not enter into friendly relations, nor bow to each other in the streets." It would have been an inestimable blessing to the place, if some second Luther could have come forth from those hoary old college gates, and in a voice whose thunder neither Deans, nor Archdeacons, nor the whole body corporate of ecclesiastical dignitaries could resist, have preached the glorious doctrine of position by individual merit, and not position by the accident of being born a churchman and continuing so.

Indeed the very architecture of the place

seemed to cry out against those false barriers which pride had erected between one set of people and another. Those quaint old rows of houses, leaning over towards each other, story after story, until from the topmost windows their respective occupants might hold a friendly chat when the day's toil was done, were a mute protest against the unutterable foolishness which kept people who had the same tastes and the same pursuits from fraternizing to any appreciable extent, or even exchanging the simple courtesies of acquaintance, because one of them performed his religious duties in a church set apart for that purpose by the bishop of the diocese, and the other worshipped the same God in a building whose only consecration was the devout, earnest breathing of man's spiritual aspirations there. But these things were so, and would doubtless remain so until the Millennium, so

much preached of in some of the popular churches, arrived, bringing with it clearer light and a more loving spirit.

Apart from its hoar of antiquity and the great reputation for learning which in by-gone years had made it the trysting-place of some of England's storied names, Ulphusby was an uninteresting city, especially for anyone who appreciated a stirring life. For, indeed there was very little life astir in those narrow, quiet streets, where sometimes at midday scarce a footfall, save of some passing student, broke their academic hush. As for public gaieties, they were few and far between. The county families got up a ball now and then, and a few enterprising people tried to raise an annual flower-show, which only survived its second birthday; and at very rare intervals a concert was given by a company of artists, who had nothing else

to do, and who, passing through the place on their way to some larger town, tried to enliven it for an hour or two with the concord of sweet sounds. A very mild undemonstrative fair, held once a year, was the only entertainment upon which the common people could confidently reckon. It came and went without much outward manifestation, save a stall or two of apples and ginger-bread in the market-place, and sometimes a penny peep-show or wax-work exhibition, pitched, by permission of the Mayor and corporation, on a spare scrap of ground, at a respectful distance from the city. In addition to this annual episode of dissipation, which was duly registered in the almanacks, an unexpected windfall of excitement visited the place sometimes in the shape of peripatetic giants and dwarfs, or panoramas unequalled for splendour and mag-

nificence, and dissolving views "on an unprecedented scale of grandeur," as the placards said, although the people who went to see the exhibitions themselves never could exactly bear witness to the correctness of the statement. That might be, however, because their ideas of splendour and magnificence were too great ever to be realised.

Lecturers fought shy of the place. There were very seldom any "courses" delivered in those musty public rooms, whose proprietors reaped so painfully small a profit from the letting of them to itinerant improvers of the public mind. And the reputation of the city for chronic stupor, with its almost proverbial terror of anything that was not in the highest degree respectable, effectually preserved it from those periodic incursions of electro-biologists, astronomical, geological, ethnological, and philo-

sophical orators, whose prelections paid them so well in other places.

Somebody unshadowed by church patronage, unintroduced by any of the leading people of the city, had once had the audacity to attempt a course of six lectures on the rise and progress of civilisation among the Caucasian tribes; but the attempt proved a signal failure, no one but the reporter of the weekly paper, two or three elderly ladies and a policeman, who thought that possibly he might be called upon to keep order, being present. Ulphusby did not approve of indiscriminate entertainment. It liked its lectures to be provided for it under the patronage of the Dean and Chapter, and even the common people attended a set of dissolving views with more satisfaction if it could be announced upon the bills that a Canon or an Archdeacon would honour the performance with his presence.

Of course the chief interest of the city gathered round the Cathedral. It was not an imposing building externally—time, damp, and the unsparing hand of the Protectorate soldiers having done much to destroy what little architectural beauty it had originally possessed. Still there was a grave, grey grandeur about it, as it towered there high over all the other buildings of the place, looking down upon them with its memories of nigh a thousand years.

The very scars and blemishes on its battered front seemed like waymarks of the people's history—rough, terrible notches cut by fire and sword, and cannon balls, in those rude times when men could only thus tell out the restless spirit which chafed within them. Here a charge from Cromwell's men had carried away an airy pinnacle; and there a fire, kindled by some Scottish raiders, had gnawed down the fair

proportions of some graceful archway; and many a crumbling niche, and headless statue, and mutilated piece of diaper work, told of the misguided zeal which had sought thus to mar what it was not strong enough to destroy.

Within, all was very quiet and peaceful. The hand of the spoiler had only touched that old Cathedral, as the hand of the scoffer touches truth, to bring out more of its exceeding preciousness and beauty. For the rude Protectorate soldiers, housing themselves here, striking with their spears the clustered columns, had broken off the outer coating, and revealed the rich polished marble underneath; and in some shrine of saint or virgin the same violent hands, intending to destroy, had delved upon the pavement, knocking up here and there fragments of coloured marble, which hinted of fair designs hidden away under the unsightly rough

slabs which had been put there some time to raise the floor. And tearing down the paintings from the walls, they found rich tracery of diaper work behind, far more beautiful than the canvas they had spoiled. They thought to have marred the place for ever, but they only revealed its beauties to others, who, coming after them, restored what had so long been hidden behind the dust and accumulated rubbish of centuries, waiting for touch of friend or foe to bring it into view.

So now the sunlight coming through those narrow lancet windows cast a glow of purple and crimson upon clustered shafts of dark polished marble, and lit up the graven legend on some saintly shrine, and made a trail of glory as it passed over tessellated pavement, wrought in many a quaint device of cross and trefoil. And it lingered lovingly, too, before at

evening time it died away, upon here and there a toil-worn mechanic, or poor labouring house mother, who, the long day's labour closed at last, returning home way-worn and weary, or leaving for a little season the war and tumult of contending voices, found here what Protestantism has too long denied to her poor untaught, uncherished children, a place where they may pray to their Father in secret; where, the door being shut, as it never can be in their crowded, strife-ful homes, between them and the noise of life, they may gather in their wandering thoughts, and gain strength to bear up a little longer the heavy burden which a divine hand has laid upon them.

As might have been expected, the cream of Ulphusby society was to be found in the immediate neighbourhood of the Cathedral. On its south side stood a cluster of

college buildings, the colleges of St. Ulphus and St. Ninian, very weather-beaten and time-worn, yet having withal an air of sombre comfort, like most of the old houses in the city. At a little distance, but still beneath the immediate shadow of the Cathedral, beside whose blackened towers its lately-restored spire shone by contrast with increased splendence, uprose the fine old church of St. Chad's, appointed shrine of ritualism and gentility. On the north side, protected from the cutting blasts which swept across Ulphusby moors by a belt of magnificent elm trees, stood the residences of the Cathedral magnates, ivy-covered, lichen-stained houses, with massive oaken doors and stone-mullioned windows, and griffins and falcons and lions-couchant carved upon the gates which led into their secluded gardens. None of the lions looked more fierce

than that which guarded Dr. Montagu's house ; and none of the Cathedral buildings looked more well-to-do and pleasant than the one so guarded, standing back in the midst of a quaint old-fashioned garden, gorgeous now with sun-flowers and dahlias, and the richly-coloured blossoms of early autumn ; with its wealth of vine and ivy too, climbing over buttress, and oriel, and balcony, peeping with saucy freedom quite into one open casement, and turning over the leaves of a book which lies upon the oaken window-board. It is the casement of Roda's own room, and that is her book of German fairy-tales, which she has left open whilst she goes and has a romp with Jeff in the garden, the fit of crying having, as we prophesied, only been of short continuance.

CHAPTER V.

FOR nearly sixteen years Roda Montagu had lived a very happy life in that Old Deanery house, close by the blackened towers of Ulphusby Minster. True, she had her little breezes and thunder-storms sometimes, as every girl must, who is blessed with an abundance of health and spirits, a loving heart, a warm temper, and a strong will ; all of which providential blessings Roda possessed in an unusual degree ; but these only cleared the atmosphere, and made it a better medium for the sunshine which came afterwards.

Perhaps some people may object to a warm

temper and a strong will being classed under the head of blessings, especially providential blessings, they being popularly supposed to detract from, rather than add to, the happiness or even convenience of any life of which they form an integral part. Still, they are blessings, although, perhaps at the time they come into vigorous action, blessings in disguise. For a warm temper which fires up and burns out its own rubbish, and then lets the ashes be swept away, leaving the fireside clean and bright, is decidedly better for all purposes of home peace, than the weary, dreary smoulderings of a sullen spirit, which, like the damp fuel of some badly-lighted fire, hisses, sputters, and sends out volumes of choking smoke; and finally, after much coaxing, blowing, and humouring, and after causing infinite uncomfortableness in the house, goes out altogether, leaving behind it

nothing but ineffectual vexation. A strong will, too, provided it be of that fine, keen metal which will bend like a Damascus blade to the hand that touches it skilfully, yet can do its work when the time comes with one clear decisive blow, is far better for use in life's battle, than the half-tempered sword which snaps in the hand that is trusting to it, or the blunt, harmless weapon which served so well to dangle by the side in time of peace, but fails its user so pitifully when there is peace no longer.

But the Damascus blade may give a wound too much sometimes, or, glancing aside, smite where it should only dazzle; and the clear bright fire may burn out by accident something more valuable than its own rubbish. And so, perhaps, before Roda's work in the world was done, that warm temper and that strong will of

hers might cause mischief both to herself and others.

Up to the present time, however, they had only served to give a pleasant piquancy and a genial warmth—so pleasant and so genial, that those who knew her best could scarcely wish them other than they were. It was so pretty to see her kindle up when she read or heard any tale of injustice and wrong; how the light would flash into her clear blue eyes, and the colour deepen in her cheeks, and the little foot stamp, and the little hands be clenched, as if in indignant protest. And if it was a wrong that she could right, or if it was a piece of injustice that she could punish, she was up and doing like a little Aristides, though the wrong might only be that of Jeff the black terrier, who was bullying Lily the grey one out of her proper share of breakfast from the plate by Dr.

Montagu's side ; and the injustice that of some cowardly little urchins in the Minster Close, who were cheating their companions at marbles and pocketing more "allies" than they had won fairly. So well was that championship of hers recognised at last, that impetuous intolerance of wrong, that promptitude in avenging it to the utmost of her power, that the chorister boys who were wont to cheat at "knuckle-down" and tyrannize over their smaller companions at "tardy," always carried on these nefarious practices out of sight of the Old Deanery gates, or cleared off into obscure corners, when Roda's quick light step was heard crossing the Close. For many a confiscated "alley," many a one-sided game summarily put a stop to, many an outburst of indignant reproof, had given them sufficiently practical illustration how justice never lingered when the head-master's

young daughter had the administration of it.

There was one thing which Roda needed to make her a truly beautiful character, and that was, the discipline of some want or sorrow. It would come, it would surely come, but even now it had tarried longer than it does in most lives. Since her mother died, and that was before Roda could remember, no sickness nor trouble of any kind had reached the Old Deanery. No temporal cares, either, vexed it with their daily pressure. There was no need for sparing and saving, no wear and tear of brain in devising schemes whereby appearances might be kept up. There was no draining away of comfort from the private home life, that the outside of it—that which other people could look upon—might be made more imposing; that splendid entertainments might be given and a good position achieved in Ulphusby

society. Under Aunt Phillis's wise and loving guidance everything moved on smoothly and comfortably. When servants once came to that house they scarcely ever went away, except to be married, and then the Doctor always gave them their wedding breakfast and some trifle of household gear to remember him by. Malala, the head servant, or laundress as she liked to call herself, thinking it had a grander sound, became a member of the cabinet in the second year of Miss Chickory's reign, and always used to say when hiring time came round, that she meant to stay there until someone came to fetch her away—referring to some possible matrimonial change which might one day take place. But as the years passed on and nobody *did* fetch her, or as those who came with such intentions were one by one dismissed as unsuitable, Malala, like most sensible women,

being unwilling to throw herself away, she began to be looked upon as a permanent part of the establishment, and took all its interests into her heart accordingly. She was a real, sterling, honest woman, almost as devoted to duty as Aunt Phillis herself, and all that a good servant *can* be in a house—few people perhaps knowing how much that is—Malala was in the Old Deanery.

Then, too, to make Roda's life still happier, there were no sour tempers to be kept sweet by continual petting and humouring. There was not a single person in that little household, whom, to use the common phrase, it was "impossible to get along with." If Dr. Montagu had a touch of selfishness in his disposition—and he certainly had—it manifested itself in that easy-goingness which avoids coming into collision with anybody. His notions of right and wrong were by no

means so lofty as those of his young daughter. His principle was to make life a pleasant, comfortable thing; and if, whilst doing this for himself, he also made it pleasant and comfortable for others, so much the better. Many men, and women too, do this sort of thing all their lives, and yet get credit for being thoroughly pleasant people, no one ever finding out that compact, well-covered selfishness is the foundation upon which they manage to build such a fair-seeming structure.

Most likely Roda had not found out this defect in her father's character. Circumstances might so be ordered that she never should find it out at all. She had discovered, though, that if any trouble had to be taken about anything, it was invariably taken by Aunt Phillis. But then she always took it with such sunny cheerfulness, with such a ready appropriation of it

as her own proper portion, that a more experienced perception than Roda's might have failed to note that there was any unselfishness in her taking of it, any more than that there was selfishness in those who left it for her to take. And perhaps dear old Miss Chickory,—as every one called her now, for she was beginning to be a little the worse for wear,—so careful for the comfort of others, diffusing such an atmosphere of peace and quietness around her, was quite as unconscious of her own self-forgetfulness as Dr. Montagu, universally acknowledged to be a capital good fellow, was unconscious of his self-absorption.

However that might be, the Old Deanery house was a thoroughly pleasant home, and Roda lived a thoroughly pleasant life in it—a life in which there was neither care nor thought nor anxiety, no need for anything but just to

enjoy the days as they passed on, and to build up her own little innocent castles in the air, and to romp with Jeff and Lily in the great garden; and then at night, when the day's work, such work as it was for her, was over, to lie down in her warm casemented chamber, and dream happy dreams, until the sweet organ music of the early morning service in Ulphusby Minster woke her to another day of unthinking enjoyment.

No life that to discipline Miss Roda, or tone down the natural eagerness and buoyancy and bright untutored impatience of her young nature. Even Aunt Phillis used to shake her head sometimes, and say to herself, "This must come to an end some day;" but she only said it to herself. She never talked it over with Roda's papa, or tried to devise any schemes whereby a little wholesome bitterness might be

brought into a cup which now only held the sweet. She did not, like some over-wise people, seek to check the sparkle of the young girl's joyfulness with a perpetual reminder of something mysteriously dreadful looming before her in the untried years of life. She never said, when Roda's laugh rang out so merrily through the old rooms, "Ah! well, wait a few years, and *then*——" as though present joy was a thing that must needs be paid for by future sorrow; a sort of youthful indiscretion, for which maturer years would take their revenge, in much care, and weariness, and suffering.

Aunt Phillis had a very favourite little book of daily reflections, with a Latin quotation at the beginning of it—

"Orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano."

She knew nothing about the Classics herself, and this sentence had often puzzled her when

she read the book, so one day she got Dr. Montagu to translate it for her. She could not remember the exact words even then ; but at all events it was something about the desirableness of a sound mind in a sound body. And Aunt Phillis thought that such a life as Roda was living now, with its freedom, both mental and physical, the perfect love and confidence which closed it round, the fearless unrestraint with which every thought and longing of it could be expressed, was the best means of producing a sound mind in a sound body, and also the best education for the future, whatever that future might be. For a nature unfettered by anything but a wise restraint from meanness and wrong-doing—which was the chief restraint Aunt Phillis exercised—unwarped by prejudice, unsoured by suspicion or want of love, free to grow like the trees in the Old Deanery garden, with air

and sunshine all round it, every part springing outward to the light, nothing cramped, nothing distorted, would not greatly fail when the needful winds of trial swept over it. If it bent at all, it would only bend to strike its roots more firmly in the soil, not to snap and break, and then measure its fair length upon the ground, a pitiful eyesore to those who had tended it so carefully.

Perhaps Aunt Phillis was right.

CHAPTER VI.

RODA never used to trouble herself very much about the postman's knock, nor did she care greatly for any of the letters he brought, except those from Canada; and she only looked after them because of the foreign stamps, for some of the little boys at the grammar school had taken the prevailing epidemic, and were interceding with their friends for foreign stamps as earnestly as a portionless younger son intercedes for foreign appointments. And she did enjoy seeing their rosy faces brighten, and their eager eyes sparkle, as one after another the empty spaces in their albums

got filled up. As for anything else, the post-man might either come or not, just as he liked. It was of no consequence to her. She had no band of school-girl friends at a distance who poured out their deathless affection through the medium of violet ink and rose-coloured paper.

As yet, too, she was ignorant of that thrill of sweet expectation with which a young girl looks for and opens her first love letter. She had read about it in story books, she had wondered what it could be like, and if it would ever come to her; but out of that quiet home, in which all her life had been spent, there was no other world for her, no one whose voice, or look, or smile could add anything to her happiness, or in whose memory she cared very much to be held.

The only letters she ever got, except when Aunt Phillis went away into Scotland, were

from her two cousins in London, the only two cousins she possessed; very admirably brought up young ladies, who used to write to her sometimes by way of composition exercise, under the superintendence of their governess, giving her carefully worded accounts of their studies, and what books they had been reading, and what lectures they had been attending, and what sort of weather they had been having in town for the last few days. Of course the letters required answering, and the answering of them was a terrible weariness to poor Roda, who never attended any courses of lectures, or read books that could be conveniently summarised in a paragraph or two; and whose ideas when not flowing out towards some one who loved her and cared for her, were exceedingly averse to anything like perspicuous arrangement. Moreover, she had the notion that her cousins, who were a year or two

in advance of her own age, looked down upon her, somewhat contemptuously, from their superior altitude of intellectual cultivation. And indeed they did for the most part write to her with that air of patronising condescension which London people are apt to assume towards dwellers in quiet country towns, and which dwellers in quiet country towns in their turn assume when they are writing to their friends in remote rural districts. Roda did not like to be looked down upon, because she thought she knew quite as much as her cousins, and so when the time came that she could no longer put off answering the letters, she used to begin as far as possible from the top of the first page, and also to sit down to her task at a judiciously short interval before dinner or tea, the summons to which, when she had got as far as the middle of the third page, was a reasonable excuse for concluding,

with affectionate regards and apologies for not saying any more at present. Then when she had folded and sealed up her letters, she used to give herself an impatient shake, as much as to say—

“There, I’ve done with that plague, at any rate !”

This being Roda’s state of mind in respect of general correspondence, she never became excited when the postman’s scarlet collar was seen at the other end of the Close; neither did she career, breathless with impatience, from the farthest corner of the house when his loud double knock resounded through it. And this was the reason, too, why, one sunny July morning, when the Canadian letters were delivered, she merely asked her papa to take care of the stamps for her, as they had been promised to little Arthur Stumps of the Grammar School more

than three months ago, and he would be sure to ask for them next time he came to fetch clover for his rabbits. Neither, when her papa began to read the letter aloud, and comment upon it, as he generally did upon the Canadian letters, did she pay any special attention to what he said. She only gathered up something about the sailing of a vessel called the *Rover*, and something else about the University of Frankfort, and then two or three disconnected scraps about the pleasantness of old friendships, and the reviving of early recollections. Whilst Dr. Montagu was reading about the early recollections, there was a great scuffle outside the garden-gate, caused by some little boys who were cheating over hop-sotch, which scuffle Roda felt herself bound to inquire into; and by the time she had rated the young miscreants for their dishonesty, and scattered them to the

farthest corner of the Close, the letter and its contents had been as effectually banished from her thoughts.

It was not many days after this, that, coming in out of the garden one morning, with her apron full of flowers which she had been gathering for the baskets in the dining-room, and dancing through the hall in her usual careless fashion, sometimes singing, sometimes whistling to Jeff, who was frisking round her, trying to pull the flowers out of her apron, she was startled as she entered the room by seeing some one—a stranger, with sunburnt face and curly black hair—sitting in Aunt Phillis's chair. Aunt Phillis had gone to the morning service, and Dr. Montagu was at the reading-room.

She had never seen him before; a single look was quite enough to convince her of that. He was a very pleasant, intelligent-looking young

man, of an entirely different stamp from the Ulphusby students. A remark which need not be considered to imply any reflection on the pleasantness or intelligence of the academic population, who were indeed a very gentlemanly set of youths, with a proper becoming gravity about them for the most part, and who would have considered themselves, as well as the dignity of the place, very much affronted if any exception had been taken to their personal appearance. But this young man, standing by Aunt Phillis's chair—for he had risen when Roda came in, and was preparing to say something for himself by way of introduction—seemed to be of an entirely different style from the Ulphusby people. There was a slightly foreign air about the cut of his dress.

The coat which he carried over his arm had fur facings to it—a most needless precaution, as

Roda thought, for the middle of July; and even his little black valise had an outlandish look, very unlike the shiny articles one sees in respectable English shop windows. Also, mingling with his quiet gentlemanly bearing, there was a certain easy freedom, almost brusquerie, which, in a strictly proper place like Ulphusby, might be considered as slightly out of order.

Roda, who was quite unaccustomed to strangers, scarcely knew what to do or say, and the young man, over whose face there had come a roguish smile, evidently enjoyed her perplexity. At last she said, what, if not the most correct thing that could have been said under the circumstances, was certainly unimpeachable so far as its veracity was concerned,

“I don’t know who you are.”

She looked so pretty as she said this, her head just a little inclined to one side, half shyly,

half saucily, the rosy colour flushing up into her cheeks, one round white arm gathering close to her the black stuff apron filled with leaves and flowers, some of which were straying out over her dress. And there was such a sweet hesitation in her voice as she said the words.

The youth—for indeed he was scarcely more than a youth, though for courtesy's sake we have hitherto paid him the compliment of calling him a young gentleman—broke into a merry laugh as Roda gave utterance to her thoughts in this simple fashion.

“Don't suppose you do. I come from Canada west, and my name is Alec Ianson.”

“Oh! very well,” Roda said, not knowing what else to say.

And then Alec went on—

“I've come here on my way to Frankfort,

where I'm going to a German school to learn the language, and I came to see you because your father and my father are very old friends. They were at college together."

Roda began to understand now. This was the young man her papa had been talking of, lately, as likely to come over to England for a year or two. And this visit of his was doubtless what the Canadian letter had been about. He could not be intending to stay very long, though, for that queer-looking little black bag was so very, very small.

Roda scarcely knew whether to be glad or sorry for that. He looked as if he would be a pleasant person to get along with, not above a romp, nor too dignified for a frisk with Jeff and Lily, if they should ever get to that degree of friendship. She thought she should rather like him to stay.

"But how do you know who I am?" she asked, still looking at him with that questioning, hesitating glance. For she was quite sure she had never seen him before, and people never told her that she was so remarkably like her papa, that the relationship could speak for itself in their faces, without any other witness.

"Oh! I know you well enough," he replied, still with that roguish, merry smile. "I have heard you talked about at our place ever since you were ten years old, and Dr. Montagu sent us a portrait of you only last time he wrote. You had that frock on, with the little bows down the front; but your hair was rather tidier than it is now."

Roda put up her hand involuntarily. Yes, her hair was all in a mess. And that unfortunate cob behind had almost entirely dissolved

into a cataract of curls. "Yes, I—I know it *is* very untidy," she said apologetically; "but—but you know I was going to make it straight again before dinner. I *always* make it straight before dinner."

"Never you mind whether you do or not—it looks very pretty as it is. And you're the little girl, too, that used to cuff Jeff or Lily, I forget which, when one of them wanted to get some of the other's breakfast. And you come down strong sometimes upon the chorister boys when they cheat at marbles. I've wanted to know you ever since I heard about your doing that, for I hate cheating myself."

And one might have told that from the look of him. Alec Ianson had a frank open face, and there was such a genuine unaffectedness about his manners, albeit they lacked a little of the courtesy of old England. Certainly any cheating

that got done in the world would not be helped on by this young Canadian.

Roda was just thinking what she should say next, and wondering whether she should ring the bell and have luncheon brought in, as she could not tell how long he had been travelling, when Dr. Montagu came into the room, and there was an uproarious greeting and hand-shaking, under cover of which she tucked up her flowers and beat a retreat to her own room.

She did not make her appearance any more until dinner-time, looking prettier than ever in her light pink muslin frock, the dark hair, which had been so untidy when Mr. Ianson came, brushed away and disposed in a picturesque knot of curls at the back of her head. Perhaps she had taken a little extra pains over it, for Malala had often told her that when stran-

gers came to the house she ought to try and make herself look like a Christian. It was a shame to be seen, Malala said, the way her hair used to hang about her neck, not fit for a decent person to sit down in the room with. She ought to wear it in a net like the rest of girls, or else have it properly pinned up, so that it couldn't tumble down over her frocks, making them such a sight as never was.

"Malala, *will* it do?" said Roda anxiously, peeping into the still-room as she came downstairs to dinner. "I can't make it look any better than this, and I'm sure I've done the best I could."

Malala expressed her approbation, though in a somewhat modified form. She loved her master's daughter very dearly, but she clung to the old-fashioned notion that praise and plum-pudding are bad things for children; and as she

still looked upon Roda in the light of a child, she considered it her duty to administer the praise accordingly. As for the pudding, that was not always under her control, or Roda would not have got so much as she did sometimes.

Dr. Montagu, who, in the excitement of unexpectedly meeting the son of his old friend, had not noticed that Roda was in the room when he came home, introduced them formally to each other now ; and Alec, nothing loth, gave the little hand a real Canadian grip, getting from Roda a second smile, not quite so shy this time, but rather saucy still, and so bright, that it fixed her at once and for ever in his good graces as one of the prettiest, most bewitching little English girls he had ever seen, with no nonsense about her at all, and no affectation—so different from the stuck-up young ladies of New York, who

seemed to pass from children into women at a single bound—never lingering, like this little Roda, on the sweet border-land of girlhood ; or blending, as she did, a maiden's coy grace with all the frank fearlessness of youth. And as Roda, whilst he thought thus of her, was mentally determining that he was just the sort of person to get along nicely with, there was every prospect of their becoming good friends, if only Alec stayed long enough for that desirable end to be brought about.

But as the young Canadian held that little hand in his, and looked down into the bright girlish face, he was only thinking what a pretty plaything Roda would be, how pleasantly she would help to wile away any time that he might have to spend at the Old Deanery. And as Roda settled in her own mind that he was a very nice person to get along with, she was just

putting him in the same category as Jeff and Lily, and old Fits, the gardener, and looking forward to enjoying his society in the same way as she enjoyed theirs. So that the friendship was not likely to lead to any very perilous results, even if Alec did stay long enough for it to become firmly established.

Whilst the gentlemen were sitting together over their wine, Dr. Montagu found that the Frankfort College, to which young Alec was going for the purpose of studying French and German, before returning to Ulphusby for a year's hard work under the professors there, would not open until the beginning of October, and this interval of nearly three months Alec had to dispose of as best he could. When he set sail from New York in the *Rover*, he expected to have just touched at the old country, journeyed to one or two of its most interesting

shrines, seen some of his father's friends, and then passed on at once to Frankfort, there to spend a couple of years, and get as many prizes as were within his reach. But when he got to London, letters were waiting for him there which put off the commencement of his Continental course for three months, owing to some changes in the Frankfort College. So instead of setting to work at once, Alec Ianson found himself, at the mature age of nineteen, with a couple of hundred pounds to his credit at the bank, and two or three months of complete idleness before him—months in which he might do just as he liked, take up with any sort of mischief, or folly, or worse, which happened to come in his way, and perhaps do for himself what no collegiate or university course could ever undo.

In this somewhat perilous position he took the

wisest step that could be taken. He came to Ulphusby, to see his father's oldest friend, Dr. Montagu, intending to stay a few days with him, and then spend the rest of his spare time in some quiet out-of-the-way place, rubbing up his knowledge of French and German, and in various ways preparing himself for more rapid progress when he was once fairly afloat.

But Dr. Montagu was a kind-hearted man, a man who had seen a good deal of the world, too, and perhaps had himself stumbled over some of the snares and traps which are so freely set for the young and inexperienced. He knew what a perilous thing it is for a youth to be left alone in a land of strangers, with money and time at his command, and no work to do—at least, no work for the doing of which he is held responsible to any superior authority. And so, finding this to be Alec's position, he told him he was

welcome to make himself at home at the Old Deanery until such time as he could go forward to Frankfort, and place himself under the professors there at the opening of the session.

“It’s for your father’s sake, Alec,” he said, laying his hand on the young man’s shoulder. “I should ill repay his goodness to me if I left his son without a home when I had one to offer him. So come along here, if you can put up with a set of plain people like ourselves. We shall make no stranger of you, but you can do just as you like, and rub up your French and German yonder in my study. I don’t do much in it myself now, for I’m getting past the time for that sort of thing. I can appreciate an easy chair and a glass of old port after dinner much better than those Latin poets that your father and I used to go into such raptures over when we were both lads together like you. Just

make yourself comfortable with us, as long as you can, and when you get tired of us, why, we shall part friends just the same. I never find fault with anybody for getting tired of a place, for I should get tired of it myself, I daresay, if my bread and cheese wasn't connected with it."

Alec, sipping wine and disposing of strawberries in the doctor's handsomely furnished dining-room, thought there would not be much difficulty in making himself comfortable there for an indefinite length of time. And as for getting tired,—when he glanced through the open doorway across the hall to Dr. Montagu's study, with its loaded shelves, bulky portfolios, and capacious easy-chairs, and heard from some other room not far off, a sweet voice, Roda's voice, carolling a merry English ballad,—he was quite sure that getting tired of the Old Deanery house

was the very last thing in the world that he should think of doing.

When the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing-room, Dr. Montagu told Aunt Phillis of the arrangement he had made with Alec. He was to write up to London for his port-manteau and books, and then settle down there in the Minster Close, just like one of themselves, no fuss or difference of any kind being made on his account, until such time as the Frankfort College opened, or he got tired of his quarters.

“Which, if you’re the sensible fellow I take you to be, Alec,” said the doctor, “won’t happen just yet. I can tell you that being anywhere where you have got an Aunt Phillis to look after you, and take care of you, is wonderfully better than knocking about in those dreary London lodgings, where nobody knows any-

thing about you, or wants to know it either, and where you never find out what personal comforts mean, except by the loss of them. I've known a little of that sort of thing in my young days, but I shouldn't like to try it again. Should I, Aunt Phillis?"

And the good Doctor, rubbing his hands and stretching out his portly form on the sofa, looked across to his sister-in-law with the happy contented air of a man whose troubles lie in the past, whose life is filled with all the bliss that personal comforts and good dinners, and unexceptional digestive organs can give.

Aunt Phillis smiled. Her kindly nature loved a little praise, now and then. Not that she would not have laboured to do her duty just as well without it, but to know that she was making other people happy was all that she needed for happiness of her own. And now

that warm motherly heart was going to have someone else to spend its overflow of love upon. Instead of only two, there would be three for her to take care of, and think for, and watch over. If Alec had any lingering doubt before of his welcome to the Old Deanery, it all passed away when he looked into Aunt Phillis's face, and saw her bright smile, and heard the few, but thoroughly hearty and comfortable words with which she seconded her brother-in-law's invitation that this young stranger should make his home with them for the present.

So he stayed. Yet if Dr. Montagu had seen the quick flash of undisguised pleasure which sparkled in Roda's eyes as the arrangement was settled and compacted, he might have thought that a two months' residence at the Old Deanery, under present circumstances, had perils of its own, as real, though not so fatal,

perhaps, to his young friend's prospects in life, as a lonely and unprotected sojourn amidst the allurements of the great world of London.

CHAPTER VII.

IN the course of a day or two, Alec was completely domesticated in his new quarters. The Doctor and he had had a cosy crack in the study over books, and professors, and college routine. He had told Aunt Phillis all about his mother and sisters—how lonely he had felt when he said good-bye to them a month ago, and how it was almost more than he could do to keep from making a fool of himself when the cars began to move, and he lost sight of their waving hands, and realised for the first time that he was adrift in the world, with no

one to speak a kind word to him, or care how he got along.

But he meant to study so hard at Frankfort and get such lots of prizes and medals, and then go home and make them all so proud of him. He had some friends in the Government, who, if he passed his examination well, would use their influence to get him some colonial appointment, most likely in Canada; and so who could tell but that in process of time he might be Governor-General there, the great man of the family? At any rate he meant to try for it. There was nothing like setting a good high standard before you, for even if you did not quite reach it, you got all the benefit of the trial. But he did mean to reach *his* standard, if hard work and steady perseverance could reach it. He had everything on his side, youth and health, and plenty of pluck, and as much

ability as most lads of his age—not to be too boastful about it—and the real will to work, which after all was the best thing for anyone who wanted to get on. It was no use having everything else if a lad had not the will to work and strive and push his way up to something like a place in the world.

All this Alec said to Aunt Phillis on the evening of his first day at the Old Deanery, as they two sat in the drawing-room together, Dr. Montagu having gone to play chess with one of the professors. Aunt Phillis listened with loving patience. She had heard a good deal of that sort of thing from young men who had come to Ulphusby College, intending to shine as lights in the world, and then, instead of doing so, had subsided into the merest farthing-candle glimmer, or drifted altogether into the dim twilight of oblivion. But it was not in her kindly,

benevolent heart to put an extinguisher on Alec's aspirations, by telling him that they were likely to come to any such unheroic end. He would want all his energy and all his brightness and all his hope in the race for success. No need to trammel his footsteps in the very outset of it, by telling him how one had stumbled and another had fallen, and another had wearied, and another fainted, all long before the prize was gained. Instead, she heard what he had to say, and encouraged him to go on as he had begun; and gave him her good wishes so earnestly, that Alec took her into his heart and determined to hold her there for ever, as one of the brightest, kindest, most motherly old ladies he had ever known.

He and Roda had also made friends with each other. The day after he came they explored every nook and corner of the big old-

fashioned garden. She had shown him the thrush's nest, and the leafless apple-tree stump where at sundown the blackbird came to sing. She had made him climb, at the imminent risk of his new coat, to the top of one of the old stone buttresses by the garden wall, and there shown him a hole made by a cannon ball, more than two hundred years ago, where, that very Spring, putting in her hand by chance to look for some houseleek, she had felt, to her great surprise and delight, five little smooth round eggs; and she told him how, when the young birds were hatched, she had fed them every morning with bread crumbs soaked in milk, their mother sitting on the top of the wall, not looking a bit frightened. Because, of course, Roda said, it knew well enough that she did not want to do them any harm. All the birds in the garden knew that. And he had been

introduced to Jeff and Lily, and had learned the peculiar characters of each, with the number of times a week that Jeff used to try and cheat Lily out of her proper share of breakfast. Also she had told him that she should be sixteen next November; in return for which valuable piece of information he informed her that he had completed his nineteenth year last Christmas, and was very sorry that he should not be at home to celebrate his coming of age. After that, they agreed that he was to call her Roda instead of Miss Montagu, that being a useless piece of formalism; and she on her part was to drop Mr. Ianson and say Alec, because, as he was going to stay several weeks, or perhaps three months—for nobody could tell exactly when the Frankfort College would open—it would save them both so much trouble. Besides, Roda was such a pretty name, it seemed

a pity not to use it as much as possible.

These little preliminaries having been arranged to the satisfaction of both parties, Roda took her new friend across to the Minster, whose every nook and corner she knew as well as the blackbirds' haunts in their own garden. Here she showed him the quaint old carvings and bosses, with the stories, some whimsical enough, belonging to them; and the shrines to which, in by-gone days, pilgrims used to come from all parts of the land for penance or offering; and the sculptured martyrs, ranged side by side, with flowing robes and crowns of palm, over the eastern doorway. The lancet windows, too, each one telling the story of some olden saint; Offerus with the child Christ upon his shoulders, and Agnes with her lamb, and the holy Agatha, who suffered so much and endured so meekly, and Cecilia upward

gazing as though listening to celestial music, with many another whose legend Roda could remember well, for she had read them over and over again from the dusty old quartos in papa's study; and their faces peering down upon her now from those dim old Minster windows, seemed to her like the faces of friends. She used to wonder sometimes if there were any saints in the world now, any people who could suffer and be patient and conquer and forgive, and dying at last, win such glorious crowned rest as those Agathas and Cecilians and Christophers had done. Or were the times quite gone by for saints and martyrs, and was there nothing left now for those to do whose love was as great and whose faith as lofty as theirs?

Alec listened to everything she said, not caring a whit whether it were true or not. The

education which his father had given him out there in the far West, had not gone deeply into ecclesiastical lore, and he was rather disposed to place these quaintly beautiful legends side by side with the stories of Cinderella and Jack the Giant-Killer and Bluebeard, and other pleasant fictions which his mother used to recount when he was a little boy, always however bidding him run away and play when the tale was done and the important question had to be put—

“But is it true, mamma?”

But whether those curious legends were true or not, Alec was quite sure that the voice which repeated them was the sweetest voice he had ever heard; and no Canadian beauty or New York belle in all her glory of lace and streamers and flowers, had ever seemed to him half so beautiful as this little eager, enthusiastic child,

charming him so much because she was only a child—who kept looking up into his face with her oft recurring “you know,” and “you remember,” and “don’t you recollect?” as she ran over her romantic legends or gracefully impossible stories, taking it so for granted that he knew all about them, and only wanted just a reminder from her to bring them all back to him.

If Roda had been an experienced tactician, instead of the simple untutored little girl she was, she could not have won Alec’s favour better than by this unconscious taking for granted that he knew all about everything. For though he by no means wanted to make her believe that he did know all about everything—for that would have been a very long way from the real state of the case—still it was very flattering to his masculine vanity to feel that she assumed

the fact without his even taking the trouble to try to impress it upon her. And every man likes to feel himself superior to the woman or girl or child who is amusing him. It is very natural and abundantly proper that he should do so. For it takes away all the romance from the relation between a man and a woman when the man begins to find out that he can no longer pour out of his full vessel into her empty one, when the humiliating consciousness first dawns upon him that her vessel is, if anything, the fuller of the two, and not because he has filled it, either. A woman is completely charming to some men, only so long as she can be looked down upon. She is very much like those dainty little glass letter-weights whose interior prettiness is all lost by being lifted to a level with the eye. It is only when the person who admires them holds them low enough, that he can see

their beauty. Alec would have been very indignant if any one had accused him of looking at Roda or any other woman in the light of a glass letter-weight, a mere toy or plaything. Still he liked to feel that she was not quite equal to himself. And he liked to feel that she felt it too. Indeed, this was the principal part of the pleasantness. For what is the use of knowing your own superiority if you are the *only* person who knows it, or what is the use of having a crown if nobody recognizes your right to put it on?

Then, in return for this information about the saints and martyrs, and Roda's little confidences concerning her daily life—the scrapes she got into with Fits the gardener for running over the flower-beds, and the trouble she had sometimes with Monsieur Marony when her French exercises were not correct, or she could

not go through her verbs properly—Alec told her a little of his own life in that far-off Canadian settlement ; how they—that is, he and his elder brother—use to go out hunting bisons and buffaloes, sometimes encountering bands of red Indians with their tomahawks and scalping knives, huge, sturdy-limbed men some of them, that could have taken Roda and flung her right away, just as easily as he could toss Jeff or Lily across the garden ; others, little mean men with copper-coloured faces, and malicious eyes, and sneaking ways, men who had knives hidden under their blankets, ready to draw out and scalp anyone who did not happen to be well enough armed to resist them. He and some young fellows, friends of his, had once happened to come upon a gang of them, and it was by the merest chance that they did not get dragged away to have their brains

beaten out, and their skins made into moccassins, and their scalps hung up as ornaments in the red men's wigwams.

"In which case, Roda," said Alec, with an air of supreme unconcern, as if the chance, whichever way it went, had not been of the slightest moment—"in which case I should never have troubled you by coming and staying two months at the Old Deanery."

Roda felt rather queer at the thought of Alec's skin being made into moccassins, and his curly black hair being hung up for an ornament in some red man's hut, and she mentally resolved to hate the sneaking tribes of red Indians down to the very latest day of her existence. But would Alec tell her something more about these wonderful people and their ways? She had never heard anything like it in all her life. To sit there by Alec's side on

one of the old Minster tombs, and hear such things as these from some one who had actually seen them all for himself, was ten times better than all the story-books and fairy tales in Ulphusby Library.

So Alec, nothing loth—for he had not known anything so pleasant for a long time as to have that bright eager little face upturned to him, and to watch its changing look of wonder and delight—went on to tell her about the Indian squaws, very ugly women, he said, as different as could be from Roda, with wizened faces, and high cheek bones, and babies as ugly as themselves, strapped to pieces of board upon their backs. And how the men used to make these squaws do all the work, drive the stakes into the ground for the wigwams, and fetch wood and water, and dig up roots out of the forests, and get the food ready for them, and stand by

to wait upon them whilst they ate it. And then, when they were going to a fresh place, how these great, tall, red-skinned fellows expected the squaws to take down the tent and get up the stakes, and carry them, with the blankets and babies too, on their backs, whilst they just lounged along and smoked their pipes. He said he had once gone out hunting, and found one of these poor creatures slaving away under a great load almost big enough for a horse, and he had offered to help her with it, but she dare not let him, because if her husband had happened to see them he would have beaten, and perhaps killed her, for letting a man do any of her work.

“Just think of that, Roda. And here, you know, if you belonged to me, I should not so much as let you put out your fingers to do anything that I could do for you—no, I’m sure I

wouldn't. I hate to see a woman doing anything that a man ought to do for her."

Roda looked at her pretty hands and her neat morning frock—for she really had tried before she came down to breakfast to make herself look like a Christian, as Malala said—and she tried to fancy herself trudging through a North American forest with a baby and a whole wigwam, stakes, blankets, and everything, strapped upon her shoulders. She thought she should not like it at all. It was so very different to being an English lady, and going to balls, and having people to wait upon her, and pick up her glove or her handkerchief if she happened to drop it. Not half so pleasant. And then not to be allowed to sit down to dinner until the gentlemen—they were very funny gentlemen, though—had had as much as they wanted, and perhaps there was scarcely

anything left for the poor squaws. No wonder there was so much said about sending missionaries out to such people as the red Indians ; and no wonder that Jane Taylor, who had doubtless heard all about them, wrote that pretty little hymn that Aunt Phillis had taught her so many years ago—

“I thank the goodness and the grace.”

Certainly it *was* a great mercy to be a happy English child in a Christian land, if that was the way people did in lands that were not Christian. But then how kind it was of Alec to offer to help the poor squaw with that load of things, and what a rude cowardly fellow her husband must have been to let her carry it. And to think that Alec had really seen all this, and watched the squaws putting up the huts, and *nearly* had the back of his head cut off by a

scalping knife, and come upon the Indians at their war dance, and looked on whilst they danced and jumped, and shrieked in that horrible way. She was quite sure it would have frightened her to death, only to have heard the noise they made; and yet Alec had been amongst them and talked to them, and did not seem to care anything about it. How very brave he must be, quite a sort of hero, and yet he was so kind and pleasant, and good-tempered with it all. So very, *very* different from the stupid Ulphusby people, who seemed to spend all their time in studying the dead languages, and who had no more fun or mischief in them than one of those old gurgoyles that stuck out of the Minster.

Roda was quite right there. Alec's life, touched as it had been here and there with daring and adventure spent for the most part

in a new, uncultured country, amidst wild people and wilder scenery, had stripped away from him, or rather had prevented him from ever taking to himself at all, that strict garb of conventional propriety which, in a thoroughly-educated, long-established place like the cathedral and collegiate town of Ulphusby, was almost as needful to a gentleman who wished to belong to good society, as his actual broadcloth or kerseymere. It had made him a man in real doing and daring, long before his years had given him a right to the privileges and immunities of manhood. And the appearance of a man too; for nobody, looking on his sturdy, compact build and sunburnt face, already fringed with beard and moustache, would have thought that he was a lad of nineteen, younger by two or three years than the slim, smooth-chinned students who, with

their black stuff gowns and tasselled caps, loitered about in the college quadrangles, or assembled morning by morning in the Professor's rooms.

That wild adventurous life in the far West had not quite obscured the gentleman in him, though. From his father and mother and sisters, who had carried into their Canadian home that true refinement of mind and polish of manner which are independent of outward circumstances, he had learned enough to prevent even the most fastidious English society from being ashamed of him. Under all his brusquerie and off-handedness there shone out the true metal of good breeding. In his speech, manner, and bearing there might still be noticed that ease and courtesy which only come to any man or woman like the colour and perfume to a rose, from far back years and genera-

tions of careful culture. Alec had the chivalry of noble ancestry about him, spite of his sun-burnt face, his touch of Canadian roughness, and the informality of his general address. The very best people in Ulphusby, using that adjective in its relation to social position, would never need to tolerate young Ianson, or make allowances for him, as one unaccustomed to the rites and ceremonies of their sacred enclosure.

But if Alec had the daring and adventurous spirit of a man, the playfulness of boyhood lingered about him still. And a boy's love of teasing, too, as Roda by-and-by found out to her cost. For things did not always go on so smoothly as during that first morning's chat in Ulphusby Minster. The little stream of their friendship, starting its course on the sunny hill-top of perfect confidence and good-

will, had to fret over many a boulder and water-break, and have its silver sheen marred by many an overhanging crag before it widened out into—

But what it widened into at last is not for us to inquire now.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE first few days of Alec's visit brought nothing but sunshine and laughter to the Old Deanery. Both Dr. Montagu and Aunt Phillis thought, as indeed they had every reason to think quite on to the close of his stay with them, that young Ianson was the brightest, pleasantest, most genial guest they had ever entertained. So full of fun, and sprightliness, and merriment, so thoroughly good-tempered and well-disposed, so free from all those stuck-up affected ways by which youths just verging into manhood sometimes still

farther aggravate that unavoidably disagreeable stage of their progress.

Indeed, Dr. Montagu used sometimes to think that, if both of them had been half-a-dozen years older, there was no one to whom he could so willingly have given his little Roda as to this Alec, the son of his earliest, best-loved friend. There was that in him which would make a real true man, when experience had toned down that overflow of self-confidence, and a little wholesome discipline had gathered into wise restraint all that careless wealth of power, purpose, and daring. For Dr. Montagu believed in discipline for others, though he had very little notion of appropriating any of it to his own use.

But at sixteen and nineteen, the doctor said to himself, boys and girls were too young to think of anything of that sort; and he did not

believe that Roda, as much behind her years in womanhood as Alec was beyond his in manhood, had ever as yet given lodgment in her harum-scarum little brain to any thought of a possible future outside the walls of that old home in which life hitherto had been made for her such a thoroughly happy, joyous thing.

Dr. Montagu might be right in that supposition of his, or he might be wrong. Girls who have been left to develop after their own natural, unrestrained fashions, as Roda had, often take up these thoughts earlier than other people think they do, though they take them up with a mute, wondering reverence, and hide them far away down in their innocent hearts, there to become powerful for purity and nobleness, and perhaps suffering; instead of chattering over them as girls do who are forced out over-soon into social life, until all the delicate

bloom is rubbed away from them, or, worse still, the decay of a premature ripeness destroys their influence for anything but evil.

However that might be, or however joyously Roda's life might have flowed on up to the present time, she was certainly a great deal happier after Alec Ianson came. She had never had such a merry playfellow, she had never heard such wonderful stories, she had never got such delightful romps in the garden—for even Jeff and Lily seemed to find out that the new comer had a talent for being frisky, and could play tricks with them better than anyone else. The days had never passed so quickly, or brought her so much of real fun and merriment, until Alec had been at the Old Deanery a little more than a week, and the first slight barriers of restraint had got fairly broken down between them. Then he began to manifest that uncon-

querable passion for teasing, that mischievous propensity for practical jokes, which, out in Canada had made him such a loveable plague to his sisters, and such an inveterate nuisance to a few of the neighbouring back-woodsmen, who declared that if it had not been for his bright merry face and winning ways, which, somehow or other, always got round over them, they would have hauled him up times without number before his father, and had him soundly chastised for all the tricks he had played upon them.

Of course he never presumed to play his pranks upon Dr. Montagu or Aunt Phillis. At least not to the extent of absolute provocation, though even out of them he did not fail to pick a little bit of fun when time and opportunity served. But Roda was fair play. On her he could expend all the superabundant nonsense

and overflowing naughtiness of his disposition. He would hide her new songs and concert pieces which she was regularly practising, and then tell her that Mr. Alison, the Minster organist, was coming across the Close to give her her weekly music-lesson. He would make away with her French grammar and dictionary into the most unlikely holes and corners, and then remind her—for he knew that she always left her lessons to the very last minute—that this was Mr. Marony's day for hearing her read "Charles the Twelfth." He would pocket her thimble or scissors, or little bits of fancy-work, which were generally lying about within his reach, and then preserve such a solidly grave demeanour whilst she tumbled her work-basket upside down, and ransacked Aunt Phillis's boxes, the look of impatience and perplexity deepening on her face, until at last she could

bear it no longer, and broke out into an impetuous little burst of temper, when he would quietly produce the missing article from some of his innumerable pockets—Roda said he had twice as many pockets about him as the biggest travelling-bag she had ever seen—and tell her, with the most provoking composure, that patience being the supreme virtue, he felt it on his conscience to take every opportunity of teaching other people to practise it.

This did very well for a few times. Then Roda began to understand his tactics, and when her French books, or her new music, or her fancy-work could not be found, she used to seek him out, and look him in the face and say—

“Now, Alec.”

Whereupon Alec, after a little coaxing and persuading, would confess to having put “The

Spanish Muleteer" into Dr. Montagu's folio edition of old English divines, or the "Mountainer's Bride" into Aunt Phillis's preserve cupboard, or "Charles the Twelfth" amongst the decanters in the cellaret. Or he would direct her to the third pocket on the right-hand side of his second best coat, which was hung upon the fifth peg of the hat-stand at the north end of the hall; putting her hand into which she would find a thimble, or a piece of crochet-work, or a skein of silk, or something else, as the case might be. So after that he altered his style of joke, and some morning, perhaps, when she was absorbed in a deeply interesting fairy tale, he would get possession of her tiny Balmorals, which were very often thrown about in the side entry, that being the place where Roda usually pulled them off when she came in from her walks; and when he

had laced them up to the very top, and fastened the ends of the laces in and out so that the far-famed Gordian knot could scarcely have been more perplexing, he would rush into the study.

“Oh! Roda, *could* you go into the town and match some wool for Aunt Phillis. She wants it directly, and she can't trust little Fits, because he has no eye for colour. It's to be just like this.”

And Alec held up a scrap of something that he had fetched out of Aunt Phillis's work-basket, where there was generally some sort of knitting going forward.

Down went the book, and away went Roda upstairs like a flash of lightning. She would do anything in the world for Aunt Phillis. Two minutes afterwards she was down again,

hat and cloak on, hunting for her boots, which Alec always put very carefully just where he found them.

“Now I shall be ready in a minute. I’ve only got my boots to put on.”

But what a putting on that was! And how Alec used to laugh as she pulled and twisted the scarlet laces about, and tried in vain to thrust her little foot in, and said that she was quite sure young Fits had been at the boots, he was always getting into mischief, and he deserved to have somebody to do the same for him next time he was in a real downright hurry to go anywhere. And then she twitched and pulled again, and finally, when she was just upon the point of getting her scissors and ending the difficulty in that way, Alec would burst into a merry laugh and say that it was all a joke, and that Aunt Phillis didn’t want

the wool, and that it wasn't Fits at all, but just himself who had fastened the laces up in that way because he wanted to see how pretty she looked when she got into a real bad temper. And then he would cover his ears with his hands, for fear of summary chastisement as he said, and run out of the room, leaving Roda with her boots, scarcely knowing whether to laugh or cry ; he was such a plague, she had never known half such a plague in all her life.

He used to tell her at first that he only teased her because he was very fond of her. He did not know how it was, but he always felt as if he must tease people if he liked them very much ; and that if she had been like those grand stuck-up Miss Ducannons, who made such low bows at the Minster service, or the rich Miss Lesbanks, who was as solid and stupid

as a Dutch cheese, instead of being the dear, pretty, bright little creature she was, he should never have played her a single prank, and would have beaten even the Ulphusby students themselves, if they could have been beaten, for propriety of demeanour.

That excuse did very well at first. Roda was just waking up to a dim consciousness of her own beauty, and she rather liked to hear herself praised, especially by Alec. Indeed it was only since he came that she had found out her possessions in this respect at all, or had cared to know that she was in any way superior in personal charms to the pasty-faced Miss Ducannons, or the broadly-built Miss Lesbanks. But by-and-by, as the jokes got more numerous and the teasing lapsed from an intermittent to a chronic form, she began to think that it was almost too high a price to pay for

Alec's preference ; though even then, if she had spoken the truth, she would rather have been teased to the very verge of endurance than have heard him say that he liked anyone else better than herself. If only he would give her a little rest. If he would not be everlastingly keeping on, never letting her have a moment's peace. Even if he wasn't actually teasing her, she was quite sure he was getting ready to do so, thinking about some fresh way of tormenting her. And as mothers when the little ones are unusually quiet, always go to see what is the matter, for they know something must be going wrong then ; so when Alec gave her a little breathing time, she always suspected that mischief was brewing. And she was not often mistaken.

But one day the teasing got beyond all bounds. She was sitting at the study table,

learning her French verbs for Mr. Marony, when Alec came quietly up behind her, and without her knowing anything about it, managed to pull out the jet pin, or skewer, as he called it, which fastened up the curls behind. And when, after infinite labour and application, she had struggled to the end of that most tiresome of regulars, *tressailler*, to start, there was he, standing with a face as grave as the Lord Chancellor's, measuring off her curls into little bits, and tying them up with red tape, after the fashion, he said, of the Indian squaws, who were considered to rival the ancient Greeks and Romans in the art of hair-dressing; as she might find out for herself if she would kindly turn round and look in the glass.

Roda did turn round and look in the glass. And then Alec, too, conjugated the verb "to start," for she hit him such a ringing box on

the ear, that he pretended to fall senseless to the ground.

“Oh ! Alec, you provoking creature ! You do nothing but tease me from morning to night. I wish you had never come to see us, I do—and I shall be so glad when you go away, I shall ! For you are the tiresomest, disagreeablest, provokingest——”

“Adjectives of more than one syllable form the comparative and superlative degrees by assuming the prefixes of more and most,” said Alec, slowly and deliberately, still pretending to be in a state of grievous bodily discomfort from the vigorous application of Roda’s hand to his ear. “Being so intimately connected with the grammar-school, Miss Montagu, the least that can be expected from you is a respectful adherence to the etymological peculiarities of your mother tongue. I beg

you therefore to correct yourself, and repeat your former allegations, if you still persist in applying them to so inoffensive an individual as myself, in the form prescribed by Murray in his latest edition of the English grammar, *most* tiresome, *most* disagreeable, *most* provoking—and is there anything else you wish to add ?”

“No, only that I hate you, and I wish you had never come here to plague me,” said Roda, her face glowing with impatience and vexation.

“Bless its dear little heart !” replied Alec, soothingly. “Did they vex it so, then, and couldn’t it bear it any longer ? It was very naughty of them, it was !”

And Alec, mischievous youth that he was, put out his hand to stroke the rosy cheeks that were burning with such ineffectual anger. He

did enjoy getting Roda roused up in this way. He knew she always came round again, and was more loveable than ever after a regular burst of temper.

“Alec! Alec! I *hate* you—I’m *sure* I do!”

“Then you are very unscriptural, and that is all I can say about it. And I think it is a great shame that you have lived next door to a Minster all your life, and found out so much about the saints and martyrs, without learning that it is even worse than ungrammatical to entertain such emotions towards people who have come all the way from Canada to see you. And when you had never invited them, either.”

“You came of your own accord,” said Roda, pouting. “Nobody ever asked you.”

“Exactly so. Just what I was saying. And as you never asked me to come, you ought to

be more polite to me, seeing that I came without giving you the trouble to ask. Don't you perceive that that deduction follows the original proposition, as naturally as dessert follows dinner, or the fleecy clouds the path of their sovereign lady, the moon?"

Here Alec would put himself into a grand attitude, as though reciting from the poets. And then he would begin again with something else just as provoking as his previous train of remark, unless Aunt Phillis, entering the room, put a stop to the proceedings. So they used to go on from day to day, with slight variations in the manner and matter of their quarrelling, always making it up, though, before night, and starting fair next morning, only to stumble and fall again into some still more grievous quagmire of altercation.

Until Alec had been at the Old Deanery

five or six weeks, and then they really had a very serious difference, caused by some impolite allusions which he had made touching the condition of Roda's curls. Indeed, he had gone so far as to ask her whether brushes were an unknown luxury in the cathedral town of Ulphusby, and whether the materials usually appropriated to those articles were consumed in the manufacture of moustaches for the students, so that the inhabitants of the place could not get their dressing-cases properly supplied. Because, from the exceeding bristly nature of the hirsute appendages which he had sometimes noticed in the college quadrangles, and the very chaotic state of the only feminine coiffure which he had the opportunity of studying minutely, he thought some misappropriation of the kind he had indicated must have taken place.

Roda could bear it no longer. And after she had gone through the usual process of averring that she hated him, and wished he had never come to the Old Deanery, and after, in open defiance of Murray, and her position as daughter of the head master of Ulphusby grammar-school, she had stigmatised him as the disagreeablest, provokingest, tiresomest plague that had ever come to stay with them, she was rushing out of the room in an almost tearful state of excitement. But Alec called her back, and called her back, too, with a voice in which there was no longer any banter.

“No, Roda, don’t go away. I’m sure I’m very sorry if I’ve vexed you. You know I’ve told you before I can’t help teasing people when I like them.”

“Then I wish you wouldn’t like me,” said Roda, uttering in the heat of her impatience a

most unmitigated fib. For that Alec should have given over liking her was the very last thing in the world that she wished.

"Can't help it," Alec said. "It comes natural—liking and teasing always go together with me, like pudding and sauce, or—Tate and Brady. But I will make you a promise now, Roda, if you like. I won't tease you any more—I'm quite sure I won't, for the next three days."

"Oh ! Alec," and Roda smiled incredulously at this Utopian promise. "You can't help it. You will begin again first thing to-morrow morning, just the same as if you had never promised at all."

"No, Roda, you may trust me. When I say a thing with this sort of face," and Alec drew down the corners of his mouth, "I mean it. If I tease you from three o'clock to-day

until the same time on Thursday, you may tomahawk me, or scalp me, or do anything you like to me."

"Not once, Alec?"

"No, not once. And I don't care how provoking you are, either."

"Of course you don't, because I never am provoking. It's always you who begin. I couldn't tease anyone if I tried. I shouldn't know what to say. But you really *do* promise now, that you won't?—honour bright!"

"Oh no, I can't do that. That is a very improper request to make to a person of my political principles. I really cannot promise you that I will not honour Bright, because I think he is a downright good fellow, whatever your stupid old Ulphusby people may say about him. And I mean to honour him as much as ever I can. Besides, you never

asked me before not to honour him, and I don't see at all what that has to do with my teasing you, as you will persist in saying I do."

"There then, Alec, you are just beginning again. You know what I mean, you tiresome creature !"

"That's right, Roda; don't say tiresomest any more. I am glad you are waking up to a sense of your grammar. Now go on with the rest of the expletives."

"*Alec!*" said Roda, and she stamped her foot with such pretty impatience. "You are just as bad as ever, and you are doing it on purpose to vex me, because you say you want to see how I look when I'm crying. But I won't cry, though I'm sure I hate you as much as ever I can."

And then Roda rushed out of the room again,

lest her resolution should fail, for her eyes had already begun to sparkle with unshed tears.

“Come back, come back, little one, and I’ll tell you what I mean.”

But Roda would not come back this time. She was sure he would only tease her again, worse than ever, if she did. And what right had he to call her “little one,” just as if she was nothing but a baby! He had never called
• her such a name as that before.

CHAPTER IX.

SHE did come back again, though, in about half an hour, feeling rather sorry that she had not obeyed Alec's call, and made it up with him, especially as he had promised to behave better in future. She rather liked to show him that she could get into a temper when she chose ; but, after all, the pleasantest part of a quarrel was the getting reconciled again. Always when they had had a tiff before, and she had gone through the process of calling him names, and saying she hated him and all the rest of it, they had finished everything up with a hearty laugh, and were as good friends

as ever, nay better, until the next breeze came round. And she came back now intending to let him see that she was willing to be apologised to, and be pacified.

There was no Alec in the study, though, nor in the drawing-room, nor in the dining-room. So she went into the garden, expecting to find him smoking his cigar amongst the flower-beds. He generally had a cigar in the morning, and whilst he was smoking it he used to have a chat with old Fits the gardener.

Fits was there as usual, hobbling about amongst his geraniums and carnations, but he was only talking to himself, as he always did when he had no one else to talk to.

Roda did not like to ask him, straight out, if he knew where Alec was. There was just a little shy feeling creeping into her heart about Mr. Ianson, now, that made her think people

would notice if she seemed to care anything about him. So she only said to the old man—

“You are alone this morning, Fits.”

She was quite sure, though, that if Fits knew where Alec was, he would say so. And he did, too.

“Yes, miss, the young master’s took hisself off somewheres. I see’d him go out, and across the Close a bit since, and says he to me, Fits, says he, it’s a fine morning for a walk. Yes, sir, says I, for them as can take it. And he laughed, he did, for he’s as good-natured a gentleman as ever was, is Mr. Alec. Law! what fine cracks him and me has had together, while I’ve been agate over these flower-beds. He makes the time go so as you can’t believe your ears when the Minster strikes.”

“He doesn’t tease you, then,” thought Roda

to herself, but she was too vexed to talk any more to Fits.

And so Mr. Alec had set off and gone for a walk, without so much as having had the politeness to ask her if she would like to go, too. The most uncourteous thing he had done since he came to the Old Deanery, for he knew very well how much she enjoyed going for a walk with him—not by any means because his society was so wonderfully superior to the society of anyone else; but because, having him with her, she could go so much farther, and walk so much faster than when she went out with Aunt Phillis, who was getting rather slow in her movements now, and often used to say, as Roda slackened her own footsteps, that sixteen and sixty were badly matched in a country walk. And knowing this, he might have had the courtesy to ask if she would join him.

However, and Roda tossed her little head as she went back into the house, it was of no consequence. If Alec could do without her, she could do very well without Alec. He had been very rude to her, but she could easily punish him, if that was all. She would not sing to him next time he asked her. And when he wanted to sing his own songs, she would refuse to play for him ; or if she did play at all, she would hurry the tune so, or drag it, and put the expression in the wrong place, that he would wish he had never asked her. And then she knew he always liked to have a walk with her in the garden after tea, when it was fine and sunny ; and just because he liked it, she would contrive to have something else to do, so that he might have to take his walk alone.

Roda laughed to herself as she thought how finely she was going to serve Alec out for his

little bit of rudeness. And yet under the laugh there was a tinge of bitterness, almost the first she had ever known. For it spoiled the sweet harmony of her life to be out of tune with him, even in her thoughts.

She took extra pains to make herself look nice when she dressed for dinner that day. Alec's coming had given quite an impetus to her taste in personal decoration. If Dr. Montagu and Aunt Phillis had had as much perception as some people—the people, for instance, who used to comment upon Mrs. Dexter's intentions with regard to the Old Deanery—they would have noticed many a little touch of dawning vanity here and there in the toilet which was hurried over a month ago with such girlish carelessness and impatience. Sometimes a blue ribbon, purchased out of Roda's own pocket-money, nestled amongst the dark

curls which were knotted up so gracefully now, instead of being allowed to tumble down and spoil her best lace tuckers. Malala did not quite so often have to urge upon her young lady the necessity of making herself "look like a Christian," or of keeping her muslin frocks clean and smooth, instead of dragging them through the lilac bushes, or climbing the moss-stained walls, without ever so much as thinking of putting a garden-apron on over them. Malala thought it was her good advice which had brought all this to pass, and perhaps no one else questioned the correctness of her opinion. Certainly she had taken great pains, and spent many a weary hour in exhortations to personal neatness; and most faithfully had she watched over those muslin frocks, and shielded the wearer of them, so far as lay in her power, from becoming entirely lost to a sense of her

position and responsibilities as a young lady just about to enter life. But if Malala could have dived into the secret of Roda's newly acquired neatness and tastefulness in matters pertaining to her outward appearance, she would have found out that a single look and half a sentence from this handsome young Canadian plague, had done more towards producing that desirable end, than all her years of reproof and admonition.

Roda, however, need not have taken such pains with herself on this occasion. When, after doing all that her very limited experience suggested as possible in the way of adornment she came downstairs, trying to look supremely unconscious, no Alec had made his appearance. Neither, when the dinner-bell rang, was there any sign of him. And what seemed very strange to Roda, was, that her papa and Aunt

Phillis, both of whom were models of punctuality, made no remark about his lateness, and did not appear to be at all annoyed by it. She was still too proud to inquire where he had gone; but when they had all taken their places at the table, she did condescend to say, though in a very indifferent tone, as if any answer that might be given to the question was not of the slightest consequence to her,

“Papa, are we not going to wait for Alec?”

“Wait for Alec, Roda? Well, I think, as he is not coming back until next Thursday, we shall be rather hungry if we do wait. We had better be going on.”

And then Dr. Montagu devoted himself to the important business of carving a couple of fowls. But Aunt Phillis, seeing that Roda did not yet appear to understand what it

was all about, put in a word of explanation.

"You were not in the room, my dear, when Alec got his letters this morning. One of them was from a Frankfort professor who is staying in London now, and he wrote to ask Alec to go up and meet him there, to make arrangements for enrolling himself amongst the students, next month. You know personal interviews are always so much more satisfactory than correspondence. And he said, too, before he went away, it was *just* possible he might have to go back with this professor to Frankfort, in which case he should scarcely have time to come down here again. I don't think he will do that, though, only it is possible."

There is a popular expression about people's hearts coming up into their mouths. If such a revolution in the arrangement of the vital

organs be possible, Roda's was certainly on its upward journey, for she felt a very curious choking sensation in her throat, and a most painful emptiness where her heart ought to be. It was only by gathering up all the dignity which had come to her within this last hour or two, that she could keep herself from crying. It was so unkind of her not to have come back to Alec when he called her, because he must have wanted to make peace with her and say good-bye before he went away. But then, again, it was just as unkind of him not to tell her that he *was* going away, and to keep on teasing her quite up to the very last moment. That was what he meant, then, when he promised so faithfully not to plague her for the next three days. Of course he could not plague her when he was going to be in London all the time. Only he might as well have told

her so, and then their last words need not have been angry words.

But she didn't care. She was quite sure she didn't care one bit about it. Alec might go where he liked, and stay as long as he liked, for any difference it made to her. She was happy before he came, very happy indeed, and she did not see why she should not be just as happy now that he had gone away for three little days. Or if it was more than three days. If he *did* have to go with that professor to Frankfort, and never, never come back any more!

Here Roda's heart came up into her throat again, and she gave such a vigorous sigh to keep it down, that Aunt Phillis looked to know what was the matter. Sighing was one of the last things that Roda was apt to indulge in.

"I'm sure the fowl *is* very tough, Aunt Phillis," she said, as though to imply that for the last ten minutes she had been labouring unsuccessfully to come to a conclusion on that matter. "I can't get the bones away from each other at all, and papa has given me such a large piece."

"Well, my dear, don't sigh about it," replied unperceptive Miss Chickory, nothing doubting but that Roda's explanation went to the root of the matter. "You know we cannot always get just what we like." Roda was learning that fast enough. "I told Malala to choose the best she could, and she is a very good judge of poultry. I don't really think it is any tougher than the one we had last week, and you got those bones away well enough. Don't you remember pulling the merry-thought with Alec?"

Oh ! if Aunt Phillis had said anything else but that. It made Roda sigh again more impressively than ever. She *did* remember pulling the merry-thought with Alec, and it broke exactly in the middle, which made him say that meant they should both be married on the same day.

“Only,” as Roda had remarked, “you will be married in Canada, you know, and I shall be married in England.”

“Of course,” Alec had replied.

And then they began to talk about something else.

Roda practised silence all the rest of that weary dinner time, eating patiently what was given her, and trying to appear as if she enjoyed it; because she knew that want of appetite always attracted Aunt Phillis's attention, as the harbinger of an “attack” of some kind.

If she failed to take in her usual modicum of wholesome support, and especially of the sweet things which Alec used to laugh at her so much for enjoying, she would be sure to draw down a shower of anxious inquiries about the state of her health, and that shower, Roda felt instinctively, would soon bring down another. For even now the tears were gathering under her eyelids, and almost a single word would have destroyed her power to keep them back.

She was glad enough when dinner was over at last, and her papa had settled down for his half hour's nap in the great easy-chair. She wished that she too could go to sleep, not for half an hour only, but for three whole long days, all the time until Alec came back. For the house seemed so still and dreary without him, and when the cold thought crept into her

heart that perhaps he never would come back, Roda almost wished that she could sleep all the rest of her life away.

CHAPTER X.

SHE strolled out into the garden, where Jeff and Lily were basking in the sunshine. As soon as they saw her, they came bounding up for a frolic ; but Roda was in no mood for anything of that kind, so they had one between themselves, and apparently enjoyed it as much as though their young mistress had helped on the fun.

“They can do without me,” thought Roda to herself, sadly. And then she wondered how she ever could have had any satisfaction in playing with them. Those days when she used to scamper up and down the garden with

Jeff and Lily at her heels, seemed so distant now, quite out of her reach. She felt as if it never could be any pleasure to frisk about in that way again, or to climb on the stone wall after robins' nests, which last enjoyment had been such a source of unbounded satisfaction to her only a few months before. She was beginning to find out that the companionship of a bright, warm-hearted young fellow like Alec Ianson was a very expansive thing. It seemed to set her far-off from the little enjoyments which used to content her before he came to the Old Deanery. She knew now that they would never satisfy her again. She wanted something quite different. It was the woman's life stirring and brooding within her—the first vague, unformed longing, which, once having found its way into a girl's heart, stays there until the gift of some good man's

love, or, failing that, God's other and sometimes better gift of perfect trust in Him, quiets it for ever.

Fits was in the garden, surveying his pet flowers, talking to himself all the time in a quiet undertone. Alec used to say sometimes that if the old man could have had a reporter behind him to take up all the wisdom that dropped from his lips during these spells of meditation, the world need not have been quite so stupid as it is. Fits's proper name was John Smith. Nobody knew very much about his early youth, except that being an orphan, he had been brought up in the workhouse at Ulphusby. There, his baptismal appellation being one which he shared in common with half a dozen others, and he being subject to sudden fainting attacks, they used to call him Fits, to distinguish him from the other John Smiths who

were not affected in that way. When he came out of the workhouse he was apprenticed to a shoemaker; but accidentally injuring his right hand, he was prevented from getting a living in that department of industry. He then took to gardening, and being a steady man, though not remarkably brilliant, he succeeded tolerably well, until now in his old age, when he was no longer capable of regular work, he had found, through the kindness of Miss Chickory, a comfortable asylum in the Old Deanery, where he acted as factotum in the garden and outhouses. These did not quite occupy the whole of his time, and so, in addition, he was employed by the Dean and Chapter to mow the Minster Close four times a year, and the little square lawn in the middle of St. Ulphus Court as often. He always retained his name of Fits, finding it much more distinctive than his patronymic of

John Smith ; and his grandson, who was errand boy at the Old Deanery, was called little Fits. People who were not acquainted with his antecedents used to consider the name decidedly aristocratic, quite an honour to the family he served, and they would ask him sometimes if he was not a descendant of some noble but decayed house. Fits, however, scorned to gather a rag of respectability from such false pretensions."

"Nought o' t' sort, marm,"—they were generally ladies who asked him of his pedigree—"I were christened plain John Smith, and got my t'other name at the workus, 'cause of being took with fits, as the other John Smith didn't have 'em. That's all the grandeur I ever seed in *my* life ; and I don't look to see no more while I get my new name in the blessed kingdom o' glory. And if a man gets his name writ down

there, marm, it's small odds what folks called him here. Fits o' the Ulphusby workus ull tak' a man to heaven, nobbut he does his duty, as well as the mensefullest name ever a lord duke went there with."

Alec used generally to take a stroll round the garden in a morning, and Fits always contrived to be doing something among the flower-beds then, for he dearly loved a "crack with the quality." Alec, knowing this, would stand chatting with him sometimes for half an hour together, telling him stories about the far West, and life among the Red Indians, which made Fits open both mouth and eyes to their fullest extent, and say, as opportunity offered—

"Blessings on us! Did ever anybody hear tell the like o' such goings on!"

He missed his usual portion to-day, and was glad to take up with Roda as a substitute. Per-

haps, too, although she would never have acknowledged anything of the sort, she enjoyed hearing Alec's praises sounded, and knowing that some one besides herself could appreciate his good qualities.

"It do make an uncommon difference, Miss, it do," he said, as she strolled listlessly up to him, "now that the young master isn't about. This here place don't seem like the same. Law! Miss Roda, you might go up and down Ulphusby streets while you was footsore, and not find another to match him, accordin' to my line o' thinking."

"Yes, I daresay, Fits," and Roda tried to look supremely unconcerned; of course it was not a bit of consequence to her what anyone thought of Alec Ianson. "Papa says he is very agreeable—quite different from most of the people about here."

“Different! Why, yes, I should rather think he was. Now, look here, Miss,” and Fits laid down his rake, and put his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat, as he always did when he meant talking, “they’re a slow sort is the folks hereabouts. I was only studyin’ it out to myself a bit since, when I was agate over the winter onion beds—that bad sort, you know, Miss Roda, as I bought the seed off Martin Bray, of Ulphusby moor farm, and it’s him ought to be ashamed for sellin’ such a bag o’ rubbish. Says I to myself, Fits, says I, the Ulphusby folk is mainly like them onions o’ yours. They take a deal o’ time to grow; and when they’ve done all the growin’ that’s in ’em to do, there isn’t a deal to show for it. You see, Miss, them there onions,” and Fits pointed to a distant bed of very attenuated green fibres in the kitchen garden—“I put ’em in along wi’ the rest o’ the

kitchen stuff, and I harries 'em, and I hoes 'em, and I weeds 'em, and I waters 'em, and if it wasn't contrary to the blessed Scripters, as I never goes against, I could swear at 'em, too, sometimes; but it don't seem to forard 'em a bit, it don't. They're just as hard and dry, and not a bit o' natur' in 'em worth mentioning; and when I sees Martin Bray next market day, I mean to say to him, 'Martin Bray,' I'll say, 'them there onions, if you meant 'em for a sample of yourself, they're a good match, for they'll never do no good in the world to nobody, and that's what you won't do neither.' And then, you see, Miss Roda, that there next bed as I riz myself from some of my own last year's seed, but didn't take no better care on 'em nor what I did for the tother lot, they're springin' and sproutin', and takin' in lots o' rain and sunshine, and workin' it up into roots and

leaves, as I don't misdoubt to say but what there won't be a crop to beat 'em in any parish in this town. And it strikes me, Miss Roda, young Mr. Alec's that sort. He's been raised from a good stock, he has, and he's been well done to, and made as much of hisself, too, as the stuff could make. And that's what every man had ought to do, according to *my* line o' thinking. But you know, Miss, it don't do to go again' the Ulphusby set, 'cause they can't make so much of theirselves as Mr. Alec, bless him! It isn't in 'em. They couldn't do it if they wanted to, ever so."

"No, I don't suppose they could," said Roda, carelessly. "And then, you know, papa says Mr. Ianson has seen a great deal of the world for a young man." Roda was getting quite patronizing. "But it hasn't spoiled him. I daresay if some of the Ulphusby people had

travelled as far as he has, and seen as much, they would be so stuck up that you could not get along with them at all."

"Ay, marry, Miss Roda, that they would. It's not many people that can bear to see the world. As soon as they get to know a little bit o' what's going on about 'em, they get that conceited while there's no bearing of 'em. Some folks is like celery plants, Miss Roda—if you want 'em to do any good, you must keep 'em earthed up. As soon as ever they get out into the light, they start running to leaves and uselessness, and they aren't no good to nobody. If you want 'em sweet, you must keep em dark."

"Then I hope I'm not a celery plant," said Roda, "for I shouldn't like to be always earthed up."

"No, Miss Roda, you're not that sort. It 'ud be no more yield to earth *you* up nor it

would a rose-bush as wants all the blessed air and sunshine it can get. God Almighty has to do with us same as we do wi' plants and flowers, give 'em each their own sort o' care and tending, because what brings one forard might kill another right away. But, Miss Roda, there is some folks as does best in the dark. And I do think, sometimes, though I don't go in to have a vast o' what folks calls spiritle experience, I do think while I'm stood amongst my plants and things, studying these here ways and dealings, as how the Almighty has to do with a fairish lot of His children same as I do with my celery plants—He has to earth 'em, keep 'em dark and low, or they'd go bitter, and be fit for nothing but the dung-heap. Care and trouble is just as good for us, sometimes, Miss Roda, as earth is for the celery ; it keeps us white and sweet, and as soon as we get out of it we turn sour and

stringy. But yonder's my little lad," and Fits took his thumbs out of his waistcoat—"yonder's my little lad agate wi' the carnations, and I must give an eye tull him, or he'll be pulling off the twigs as I want to lay for next year. He's that unhandy, is little Fits, when he gets among the flowers, as it ain't no properer to trust him with 'em than a lot o' them Red Injuns as Mr. Alec talks about."

CHAPTER XI.

SLOWLY that day rolled on, and the next ;
and as the shadows of Ulphusby Minster began to lengthen on that second day, Roda could say to herself—

“To-morrow, at this time, Alec will be back again.”

For there came a letter from him on the second day, saying that there was no need for him to go on to Frankfort with the professor, and so he hoped to get down to Ulphusby some time on Thursday evening, as he intended at first.

But oh ! how very long and dreary those

three days had been! How slowly those great brazen hands on the dial-plate of the Minster had moved round! What an interminable length of time separated now between the hourly strokes of the great bell, which, when Alec was near, seemed to be always striking! How gladly she would have had her French books hidden over and over again, and her music stowed away in the most impossible places, and her thimble and scissors surreptitiously abstracted, and her hair pulled down and tied with any quantity of red tape, if only Alec had been there to play these tricks upon her. She was quite sure when he once came back again she could bear any amount of teasing; nay, it would be such an unspeakable relief to be teased again at all after those three days of unbearable dreariness and stupidity. She would not go through three such days again for all

the happiness she had ever known before Alec came to the Old Deanery.

But of course she must not let him know this. It would never do for Alec to find out that she had missed him so much. It would make him stuck up and conceited, like those celery plants Fits talked about when they got out of the dark. He would be all the better for being kept in the dark about how she had felt when he was away. She would pretend to be just as angry as ever when he began to tease her, and she would tell him that she hated him when he pulled down her hair—as he would no doubt do the first opportunity—and she would call him tiresome and provoking and disagreeable, and all that kind of thing, just as she used to do before she found out what a miserable thing it was for him to go away, even for three days. And when he came back in the evening

by that seven o'clock train from London, and asked her how she had enjoyed herself whilst he had been away, and if she had got on very nicely, she would tell him she had got on very well indeed ; because, although it was a sort of fib, she having been just as dreary as she could be, still it was a great deal better to say that than to let him know how much she had really missed him.

And she would not seem to be so very glad either, when he came back. Although she could not think of it, so near now, without her heart almost jumping up into her throat, not for sorrow but for joy ; still there was no need for him to know anything about that. She would look as if it was not of so very much consequence, after all. And yet if anything *should* happen, and he could not come that night—— Roda's poor little foolish heart went as flat down again

as though a cannon ball had fallen upon it, at the very thought of another long, stupid, weary day, such as the last three had been.

Roda turned these things over in her mind as she sauntered through the garden on the afternoon of the day that Alec was to come home. She was too restless and unsettled to do anything. Fits was there amongst the scarlet geraniums, cutting slips and potting them for next year; and he would gladly have beguiled the tedium of his work by a little conversation, but Roda was in no mood for listening to his fanciful notions to-day. And so, lying down on a heap of dry leaves which he had swept up under the old apple-tree, she pretended to be asleep, for she thought that would be the best way of letting him see that she did not want to talk.

It was a glorious August afternoon. Streaks

of golden sunshine lay up and down the old garden. The hollyhocks shot up their spires of purple and crimson around her, almost seeming to touch the sky with their budded tops. The bees were humming in the Canterbury bells, and then creeping out to sun themselves on the big bunches of fragrant white phlox, which clustered among the honeysuckle and clematis on the south wall. With every breath of wind, a shower of yellow leaves fell from the elm-trees at the garden gate. Their branches were so thinly covered now, that the Minster towers showed plainly enough through them—those great, grim, battered towers, with their fantastic gurgoyles sticking out, and their canopied niches, where stood many a hollow-eyed saint or martyr, from whose palm sceptre the leaves had long since crumbled away. Now and again she heard the

deep boom of the clock, telling off the half-hours. It would not have to strike many more times now before Alec came home. Oh! how pleasant it was to think of that!—to think of it so near, too. Only a few more journeyings of the great brazen hand—only a few more strokes of that booming tongue, and she should be quite happy again.

Some one came gently up behind her as she lay there upon the dry leaves, and dropped a full-blown rose upon her face. As it hit the end of her nose, all the petals tumbled off, and scattered over her dress. She opened her eyes, and shook herself, and jumped up, and there was Alec, with his little valise—the same little black valise that was lying by him on the hearth-rug when she came into the dining-room more than a month ago, and said to him—

“I don’t know who you are.”

Oh! how glad she was! She got hold of both his hands, and with all the innocent joy of her little heart flashing out in her face, she cried—

“Oh! Alec, Alec! I *am* so glad you have come back!”

That was just like Roda. She was always doing the very thing she wanted not to do. If she made up her mind to be particularly meek and patient, she was sure to go off into a thunderstorm of temper. If she determined to be grave and dignified, after her own little fashion, she generally got beguiled into more than ordinary demonstrativeness. Try as she might, she could not succeed in playing a part. The real thought of her heart must have its way, however much she wanted to keep it back.

She had scarcely got the words said, when she felt as if she could have cried for very vexa-

tion. But it was of no use now. They were said, and she could not unsay them. She could not draw herself up as she fully intended to have done, and say in a quiet, matter-of-fact tone—

“We are very glad to see you back again, Alec, and I hope you have enjoyed yourself very much in London.”

Though she felt as if she would have given almost anything just at that moment if she could have done so, and in some way have made Alec understand that his coming back was a matter of perfect indifference to her, she could only stand there with hot, rosy cheeks, growing hotter and rosier every moment, feeling very much as if she had made a simpleton of herself.

Alec, who was quite unprepared for this sudden burst of affectionateness, did perhaps

as unwise a thing as he could have done. For he, too, had a little of Roda's impetuous disposition, and it sometimes hurried him into actions of which he had to repent when it was too late. He ought not to have taken advantage of the young girl's innocent frankness; knowing well enough, as he could not help knowing by her blushing, confused manner, that she had been hurried into saying something that she did not want to say. He should have helped her to recover herself, or, at any rate, have met her upon her own ground, and then by-and-by they would have been all right together again. But, instead of that, he stooped down and kissed the rosy face which had never seemed to him so fair before; and then, the old impulse coming over him too strongly to be resisted, he broke into a merry mischievous laugh.

“Oh! Roda, and so this is the way you hate your friends, is it? And this is how you do when you think they are the tiresomest, disagreeablest people that ever were. Oh! you pretty little cheat, I shall know how to believe you next time you call me names.”

Roda dashed past him and flew upstairs, three steps at a time, into her room, feeling very much as though she should like to stay there for the remaining term of her natural life. She really did wish now that she had never seen this troublesome Alec, who had begun to tease and mock her as soon as he came back. She wished he had never come to the Old Deanery at all. She was quite sure she used to be a great deal happier then than she had been since. He had only made her feel stupid and queer, and spoiled the old pleasant life, which used to be quite enough for her before he came. What should she do

now when she had to meet him again? For of course she could not keep up in her own room always; and besides, as he was only going to stay a week or two longer, that would be rude. She did not want to be rude to him, though he had plagued her so. And then, it was not as if he disliked her. If he had disliked her, he would not have kissed her when she shook hands with him.

The memory of that kiss, the first she had had from anyone out of her own home, though it made the hot blood rush over Roda's face again, was a pleasant memory. Only, it had made her feel so strange. Once, a long time ago, she was walking with Aunt Phillis in the Minster, one dark winter afternoon, whilst the service was going on, and just as they passed the choir gates, the crimson curtain was pushed aside for a moment, and a glow of warm light poured

out, and she saw all the pomp and splendour and glory within. Then all was dark again, and she could only hear the music, which seemed to her sweeter than ever when she knew how fair and beautiful was the spot whence it came. She seemed to be in the dark again, now. She did not know—she could not tell, only she felt as if something new and strange was near her, something which was her own, which yet she could not reach.

Did she really wish Alec had never come? Was she really happier when Jeff and Lily were her only companions, and when the settling of quarrels between the little singing boys was her supremest excitement? It was very uncertain.

She must smooth her hair, though, and come down stairs again. That was not at all uncertain. Alec was in the room when she

got there, reading some letters which had come for him that morning. Roda took up her work—luckily it was lying on the table close at hand—and began stitching away, trying to look very unconcerned, though her heart was beating as fast as it could.

But when Alec saw her he came across to her, took hold of her hand, and said, in just his old frank pleasant way,

“Roda, I do think I didn’t behave very well to you just now. And I am sure I was quite as glad to come back to you as you could be to see me, and I was nothing but a stupid donkey to go and do as I did. But if you won’t think anything more about it, we will be friends again, just the same as we used to be—shall we?”

Alec said—“just the same,” but he did not mean it. However, Roda looked right into his

face, as she had thought she should never have been able to look into it again.

“Yes,” she said, “we will be.”

And after that she did not wish any more that she had never seen Alec Ianson.

CHAPTER XII.

THEN came a whole week of very bright, happy days. Days in which there was only just enough of teasing to give them a pleasant piquant raciness, like the touch of frost which comes sometimes with the sunshine of late September mornings. Roda would not have felt quite right if Alec had given over teasing her. She would have thought that she had offended him in some way, or that he was beginning to get tired of her. Now and then she just lost her temper enough to turn round upon him with a quick flash of her blue eyes, and a saucy toss of her head, which

shook all the glossy ringlets, and an impatient exclamation of—

“Oh! Alec! Alec! what a plague you are.”

Just the very thing that Alec wanted her to say, for she always looked so pretty when she got into her little tantrums, and tried to make him think she was really vexed with him, he knowing all the time that it was only on the surface, and that he could get her to come round in ten minutes with a kind word or two. But she never told him any more that she hated him, and wished he had never come to see them, nor had recourse to ungrammatical expletives to work off the superabundance of her indignation. At times there seemed to be almost a touch of shyness about her manner to him now, a gathering round her of maiden coyness and reserve, so different from the joyous outspoken frankness of their earlier friendship.

Or, when he looked earnestly at her, she would turn her face away, and a flush, not of anger or impatience, came into her cheeks.

Alec saw it and was content. Perhaps he was learning to think of the little bright-eyed girl as something more than a plaything. Perhaps he was thinking that she might do more than wile away a few unoccupied weeks of waiting before the grave business of his life began. At any rate, there had come between them now the consciousness of an unformed, unspoken feeling, which, shutting away the merry unreserve of the old time, had not yet bound them together in a sweeter, closer confidence. They were standing on the threshold of that Gate Beautiful, through whose flowery portals, once in a lifetime, every man and woman passes, either for good or ill ; some to find entrance into the land Beulah, the dwell-

ing of perfect peace—others to leave behind them for ever the rest, and the quietness, and the content, which, until that gate was opened, had been enough for them.

There were not so many scampers now in the garden amongst the falling leaves, not so many races—Roda running forwards, Alec backwards—down the long straight walk under the south wall. Roda was steadying down now, as her Aunt Phillis thought it quite right she should steady down, into a little of the decorum and self-possession which she must sooner or later acquire, if she ever intended to manage her papa's house for him, and undertake the responsibilities which advancing years and failing health made it difficult now for Miss Chickory to support. If that dear, kind-hearted old lady had ever had a fear at all about her bright little niece, it was lest she should carry

overmuch of childhood's glee and carelessness into the narrower, more straitened track of maidenhood ; too much for her own peace, too much for the peace of others also. She was glad, then, to hear Roda's laugh ring out not quite so noisily through the Old Deanery, and to see her lay aside some of those sports which even Aunt Phillis herself, with all the indulgence of her disposition, had thought a little too hoydenish for a young lady who would by-and-by have to take her place in the very strict and propriety-loving circle of Close society.

Aunt Phillis was of a placid, restful nature. She had never known that phase of life through which Roda was now passing. She had never known what it was to have energies unused, longings perpetually reaching out after what could not yet be attained. The ruling power of her life was benevolence, pure unmixed desire

for the happiness of others; and a woman who can be contented from that source, never has to stretch out far, or wait very long for the full-filling of her faithful, loving soul. She had never known the sweet selfishness which would fain gather into its care some heart which no one else should touch, which longs to draw to itself what can only be given to one, and to have whispered into its sole, single confidence, words which none other in the whole wide world shall hear. She was contented to share with many, all love that was given her. She was glad to be numbered, even by those whom most she prized, as but one amongst others, not the one best loved either, or whose friendship could least be spared. To know that she could fill one niche in some faithful heart was enough for her. It need not be the highest, it need not be the only one. And this, if it kept her from the

sweetest joy that life can give, kept her also from its bitterest pain. The lowly loving heart sought no more than was given to it. Doing good, helping others, giving a little to many, but everything to none, it was content.

Not so Roda. Her life would never be able to fill itself from the spring which satisfied Aunt Phillis's. What she had to give must be given to one only out of all the world. Finding that one, the sweet overflow of love which could not be spent there might enrich many others, as the overfull fountain urn sends ever a cool gentle rain upon the thirsty leaves beneath. But only when itself is full to overflowing. Until then the leaves may thirst, the flowers droop in vain, not a drop can reach them. She would be weary, unsatisfied; her life would be little use to herself or others, so long as she knew that she was but one amongst many. Only as she felt

that she could give to some other life what none but herself could give, would her own rise to its full perfection and sweetness.

But Aunt Phillis would have been completely bewildered and mystified if any one had spoken to her in this way about restlessness and longing and unsatisfied desires, or anything of the sort. She walked calmly on, holding up her own clear, well-trimmed, bright little lamp, finding sure footing in the light it gave for just one step at a time, no more. She did not know that the same light, thrown upon Roda's path, would have done no good, would have cleared away no difficulty. For we must each carry our own lamp along our own journey, and the light it gives will serve to guide safely no footsteps but our own. Perhaps Roda had not got her lamp yet, at all. Few ask for one, or take the trouble to tend it with patient, reverent care, until they

have had many a weary stumble, and sought from others the light which only God can give.

Besides, she was very happy now, and the way was so bright since Alec had come back, that she needed no help to travel along it. She knew there was a dark time coming, when he would have to go away to that Frankfort College; but hers was the joyous, trustful spirit which takes not the troubles of the future into the keeping of the present. Alec was with her now, and they were better friends than ever, and every day as it passed seemed to fill her little cup of life nearer to the brim. What need, then, to think of the College at Frankfort, with its medals and prizes and certificates, and its heaps of musty old professors?

Until one late September morning, when that red-collared postman, whose knock she had

never yet heard but with the supremest unconcern, brought Alec a foreign letter—not from Canada this time, but from Germany. And it contained a summons to answer to his name in the list of Frankfort students within the ensuing week.

No more teasing now, no more hiding of French books, or misplacing of music, or tying up of Roda's hair with bits of red tape, after the fashion of the Indian squaws. There was business that must be done in London; there were friends that must be seen, and arrangements that must be made, and only one little week for all. Within four and twenty hours of the time that the letter came, Alec was on his way to London.

"You must not forget me, Roda," he said, holding her hand as they walked together for the last time up and down the long walk under

the wall, where the red Virginian creeper grew. He had gathered a little bit, and was playing with it as he spoke. "You must be sure and not forget me, for I shall think of you every day, and many times a day."

Roda smiled as brightly as she could—she was determined not to cry until Alec was quite gone—and she promised that she would think of him as much as he thought of her. That was certainly a compact with whose fairness no one could quarrel.

"And perhaps, Roda, when you are saying your prayers, you will find a corner for my name somewhere, will you?"

"Yes, Alec, I will, if you will do as much for me."

"All right," said Alec, "and we will each of us take half this little bit of Virginian creeper, to remind us of our promise. And at the end

of a year and a half, I shall come back to Ulphusby, and go into the College for a session, so you have not seen the last of me, you know. Just a year and a half, it's only a little while, Roda, when one really comes to think about it. And then there was something else I wanted to say."

Alec stopped.

"Well, Alec?" and Roda played with the bright crimson leaves he had given her, holding them up to the sun, which, shining through them, might shed that rich colour upon her cheek.

"You were vexed with me last time I kissed you, Roda, because I had no business to do it. May I kiss you now, just once, without your being vexed?"

Roda turned her cheek to him, and he touched it lightly with his lips. And she determined

then that no other lips should touch it until he came back again. Which determination she kept faithfully enough.

Then there was a farewell chat with old Fits in the garden, and a long talk with the heads of the family in the study, during which Dr. Montagu gave him a great deal of good advice about patience, and self-denial, and application—three things which no one practised less than the good Doctor himself. Then another quiet word with Roda—for he wished her little hand to be the last he held within his own in that house—then a public leave-taking at the gate of the Old Deanery garden, a wave of his wide-awake hat as the cab drove out of the Minster Close, and Alec Ianson's visit to Ulphusby was a thing of the past.

When he was gone, and the faintest sound of distant wheels could no longer be heard,

Roda went through the rooms, gathering up the different books which he had used, laying them carefully away. Then she wrapped up the little spray of Virginian creeper, and put it into her desk, the only thing which she kept under lock and key. After that she practised for her music-lesson, and went out with Aunt Phillis, talking away to her as cheerfully as ever, and did leather work with the Miss Ducannons, and sung to her papa as usual, though it *was* rather hard work to sing with proper expression, especially the comic songs which he was so fond of hearing. Last of all came the candles, and Aunt Phillis's—

“Now, Roda, my dear!”

Which gentle intimation Roda obeyed at once, hurrying away, after the usual good-night kisses, into her own room, where, when the door was shut, and no one wanted anything more of

her, she began to cry as if her very heart would break. And that was what she was still doing when we came upon her in the first chapter of this story.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHILST Roda was passing through this, her first Slough of Despond, of which most people have to pass through so many before they come to sure footing at last in the hill country, other tears, as bitter, and not so easily to be wiped away, were being wept in a quiet little Presbyterian manse in Glasgow, very near to the west end, with its pleasant squares and terraces, and detached villas, where Miss Chickory used to go once a year to visit her friends who lived in that neighbourhood.

The tears were for the minister, who had that morning been buried under the shadow of his

own church, leaving an ailing wife and two children, a son and daughter, to fight the rest of their way as best they could over the waves of this troublesome world. It was the old, old story, listened to so often by those who know much of Scottish ministerial trials. An early marriage, with not much store of temporal goods on either side; a toilsome life, weighed down by ill-health and many cares, weighed down so heavily that at last even love's hand could bear the burden no longer, and Death took what, but for over-much care, he could not have claimed so soon.

But the widows of ministers in Scotland have scant time for grief, when the hardest stroke of sorrow leaves them lonely. Perhaps mercifully, the changes that death brings keep their tears from flowing too fast for the loved one that death has taken. Others come to claim the

shattered home. A new life, with new joys and new interests, has to be built up on the ruins of the stricken one ; and, ere yet the grass is green upon her husband's grave, the minister's widow must go forth and seek a resting place amongst strangers.

People have usually much sympathy expressed for them in such seasons of deep affliction. Mrs. Govan's friends and relatives overwhelmed her with letters of condolence. Some enclosed her copies of verses suitable to the occasion, others sent her lists of "promises," upon which to sharpen her somewhat failing trust. Others exhorted her to put her trust in the widow's God. Truly a needful thing to do ; but even the widow's God, though very pitiful and of tender mercy, does not take all care from those who should help the widow in her sorest straits. Some begged her acceptance of their good

wishes, others of their prayers, others of their profoundest sympathy. Some pointed her to brighter days, which would, they said, surely come when the bitterness of her grief was passed. Others told her that the memory of sweet years gone by should help her to suffer patiently the evil which had come upon her now. Others reminded her that life was a vale of tears, that she had already been blessed in treading it, more than many other mortals, and that this bereavement had been sent to raise her affections above earthly things, and fix them in a land where changes never come; therefore she must not mourn over-much, but endeavour to believe that all was for the best, and gird herself up to tread the remainder of the way alone, trusting that strength would be proportioned to her day, and that He who giveth the sparrows food would not suffer her to want.

Excellent advice, most excellent, and which Mrs. Govan, poor woman, tried hard to follow. But the widow of a scantily-paid minister, however large her willingness to be comforted, however clinging the grasp of her faith, cannot live entirely upon the sympathies of others, or her own resignation. The rooftree must somehow be kept over fatherless heads, and neither the memory of years gone by, nor the hope of years to come, can do it. Food must be spread upon the table still, though the lips that used to bless it, will do so no more; and neither good wishes nor prayers, howsoever plentifully offered, can keep that table spread, when the bread-winner is taken away. The most benignant commendation of orphans to the care of Him who clothes the lilies of the field, will not keep their scanty mourning from growing threadbare, or the carefully-spent purse from slowly wasting

away, now that the labour of no weary brain enriches it from day to day. Prayers, sympathies, good wishes, pious counsels, may keep the poor shattered bark from sinking in mid ocean, but alone they will never bring it safely to the haven where it would be.

Miss Chickory also wrote to the widow. She had never been very intimate with her, not being a woman who made many new friends, and Mrs. Govan's health, too, for many years had been so delicate that she could go very seldom into company. But Roda's aunt had visited her sometimes when she went to stay with her own friends at the West-end, and she felt a kindly interest in the minister's home, even before this heavy shadow passed over it, and something more tangible than kindly interest was needed there.

So when she heard of the grief which had

befallen Mrs. Govan, she sat down and wrote a few lines of honest, simple condolence. Aunt Phillis was not brilliantly gifted in the art of expressing her thoughts. She could abound in works of love, but when words were wanted too, especially written words, she found it hard to say what her faithful heart truly felt of sympathy and good-will. However, she put together a few brief sentences expressive of the sorrow which all felt for one whose home peace had been so grievously broken. And then she did what none of the other sympathising friends had done, she asked if she could be of any help to Mrs. Govan in arranging her plans for the future ; and with Dr. Montagu's consent, for he was always ready to help Aunt Phillis in her benevolent endeavours, when they involved no self-denial to himself, she offered Mrs. Govan or her children a home at the Old Deanery

until such time as she could make one for herself elsewhere.

Marian, the daughter, a girl of eighteen, upon whom fell the task of answering most of the consolatory letters, replied to this too. She said they had not been able as yet to think much about the future. When the debts were paid, and her father's affairs settled, they should have about five and thirty pounds a year to depend upon, the proceeds of Mr. Govan's life assurance, and a small legacy which had lately come to her mother from the death of a distant relative. For her mother and herself, she said, she had no fear. She was quite sure that with the little they already had, she should be able, either in Glasgow or elsewhere, to earn as much as would make them comfortable, though not enough, perhaps, for more than comfort. She would either take pupils, or go out to teach, or

give music-lessons, and, in addition, had thought that, if they could meet with a suitable house in some quiet place, they might have one or two lodgers, and so add a little to what she was able to get by teaching. Her mother's health was so frail now, that the chief care of earning a livelihood, and keeping the home together, must depend upon herself. Even before their father's death she had been able to take but little part in household duties, and since then she had been so weighed down by sorrow, that even the needful business arrangements could not be attended to by her. Marian had had to manage everything, as well as she could, with the help of her brother, and some of the members of the congregation, who had been very good to them in taking what press of care strangers could take out of their hands.

It was about her brother, Marian said, that she

felt most anxiety. He was nearly twenty-one, but had not yet fixed upon any profession. Her father had been anxious that he should enter the ministry, and his education had been carefully attended to, with the hope that he would one day follow that calling. However, he did not seem to have any taste for the ministerial profession. Perhaps, situated as they were now, with small means, and not much patronage, it would only be a waste of time for him to turn his thoughts in that direction, for many years must of necessity pass over, and great expenses be incurred in college preparations, before he could expect to obtain even a very small charge. Many ministers, like her father, had worked on all their lives without commanding even the salary of a moderate banker's clerk, to say nothing of being able to lay by a fund in case of sickness or unexpected

expenses ; and her brother, even if he had been persuaded to set his mind upon the same profession, might have toiled with no better temporal success.

The only thing, Marian said, that he seemed to have a great taste for, was music. He had made tolerable proficiency in it already, considering the very moderate advantages he had had for studying it, and both she and her mother thought that, if he could be placed for a year or two under some first-rate master, he might prepare himself for an organist's situation, and also, by taking pupils, add something to the general fund. Of course he would not have very much for them at first, but every little would help ; and even if he could only earn enough to cover his own personal expenses, and perhaps the expense of tuition, she thought that by her own industry she should be able to

supply what else was needed to make them comfortable. She had been talking the matter over with him, and he had taken it up very eagerly. Indeed, now for the first time, his mind appeared to be definitely fixed on this line of life, and since he was so much more likely to succeed in a profession which met his own tastes than in one to which only duty impelled him, they thought it best to give him such facilities as they could, and look out for a home in some town where he would be likely to make his way better than he could hope to make it in a place so taken up with trade and commerce as Glasgow.

It was a sensible, straightforward letter, with no violent bursts of sorrow, no wild regrets in it, only an under-current of sadness and steady resolution running through it. The words were like the words of one who had already seen

much care, and been accustomed to think for others, and to bear, both for herself and those who could not carry it so patiently as herself, the burden of life. As indeed Marian Govan had borne it for many years ; as she would most likely have to bear it, even to the end.

When the German philosophers have anything important on their minds, they have recourse to their pipes, and smoke away in meditative silence, until the scheme is elaborated, and some plan of action definitely worked out. What the German philosopher's pipe is to him, Aunt Phillis's knitting was to her. Whenever she took to her lambswool with unwonted industry and determination, both Dr. Montagu and Roda knew that something would come of it, that some benevolent purpose was being worked out in time to the click of those needles, and that in process of

days or weeks the kindly old face would brighten up, and the words—

“Do you know, Brother Montagu? I’ve been thinking—” would herald the unfolding of the plan. And once unfolded, Aunt Phillis’s power, and not Aunt Phillis’s will, would be the only barrier to its speedy and entire accomplishment.

As soon as that letter came from the U. P. manse in Glasgow, Miss Chickory set a fresh stocking on her needles, and gave over her customary afternoon nap. By the time the stocking was finished, the plan was elaborated and submitted to Dr. Montagu, who gave it his unqualified approval; and then Aunt Phillis wrote to Marian Govan a second letter, full of hope and cheerfulness. Words, unwedded to actions, baffled her sometimes in the writing of them, but when she had anything

practical to say, Aunt Phillis could say it as clearly as most people.

She told Marian that she had been thinking very much about their position, and how they might make the best of it. There were not many ways, she knew, in which women who had been delicately brought up, and who were left to struggle alone, could help themselves. But when a young man of talent and promise, like Avery Govan, was still spared to them, she thought they need not fear, with his assistance, getting through their present difficulties, and by-and-by establishing themselves in a position almost equal, so far as temporal good was concerned, to the one they had lost. She had made up her mind, she said, that the best thing they could do, under present circumstances, would be to come to Ulphusby, rent a house in some quiet neighbourhood, and take

one or two students to board with them. There were always fresh students coming to the colleges, who could not be accommodated in them, and therefore sought board and lodging in some respectable family, not far away. The Ulphusby students, too, for the most part, were such quiet, well-behaved young men, diligent and plodding, not full of money and fun and mischief, like the undergraduates in some of the university towns which she could mention ; but very attentive to their studies, making these, and not wine parties or rowing clubs, the chief object of their residence in the place. Even Mrs. Govan, delicate as she was, need not fear undertaking one or two of them, especially the divinity students, who were almost without exception a hard-working, industrious set.

And then, as for Avery, if his mind was fixed

upon the musical profession,—and it certainly was a very lucrative profession, when a young man brought talent and industry to it,—there was no place in which he could prepare himself for it better than at Ulphusby; for Mr. Alison, the Cathedral organist, a first-class man in his profession, was looking out just now for an assistant pupil, who would help him in the training of the chorister boys, in return for instruction on the organ. And with a recommendation from a man like Mr. Alison, who was reputed the best musician in all the country round, Avery might, if he only took pains, and worked hard, get the first vacant situation in any of the neighbouring churches, besides being introduced to pupils as soon as he was competent to take them. Of course, just at first, as his sister said, he must be content with small terms, and creep up gradually, little by

little, to the half-guinea an hour which Mr. Alison had had for some years ; but still, even a trifle such as he might get for very young pupils, would be a very useful addition to the little income which they had to depend upon. Indeed, Miss Chickory said, if all England had been sought over, there could not have been a better 'place than Ulphusby found for a young man who was wanting to make his way in the musical profession.

It was even better than London, for living was so expensive there, and besides the metropolis threw temptation in a young man's way, which he would never have to battle against in a quiet place like Ulphusby. Many a youth who had gone to London, even with the restraint of home and friends about him, and longing to live a decent, steady, regular life, had been swept away by the current of folly

and dissipation which poured down its streets, and carried, against his will, along that downward course, which, once begun, is seldom retraced. But at Ulphusby, it was so easy to keep straight, the place offered so few temptations to anything but the most trifling amusement, and almost none to those more dangerous forms of vice, which, in a great town, thrust themselves into a young man's path, and almost force him into their power. Aunt Phillis was quite sure Avery Govan could not come to a better place than the quiet little city of Ulphusby.

Then, if Marian was anxious for teaching, there were shoals of respectable families with small children, who would only be too thankful to meet with a lady-like young person, well introduced, to give lessons for an hour or two daily. Or, if she could not well leave home on

account of her mother's delicate health, she might have the children at her own house, and so perhaps form the nucleus of a flourishing school, which might in future years be much more than a competence for her, when perhaps Avery would be settled in life, and wanting all that he could earn for himself. Moreover, Miss Chickory had seen a house in Ulphus Court advertised to be let. A neat, genteel, compact little house, within a stone's throw of the principal college, just the place for a quiet family, such as Mrs. Govan's would be, and very convenient for the students, who never liked to have far to walk to their colleges. Very near the Cathedral, too, so that Avery would be just on the spot for his duties, if he did succeed in obtaining the situation under Mr. Alison, as there was not the slightest doubt he might do, with Dr. Montagu's recommendation. And

Miss Chickory knew of at least five families within easy walking distance, including Mrs. Dexter, of St. Ninian's Lodge, where there were young children just ready to be sent to a nice genteel preparatory school, or to have private lessons at home. A more suitable house, in a more respectable situation, at a more moderate rent, could not have been found in all Ulphusby.

Finally, as Miss Chickory suggested, Mrs. Govan had few interests to give up in leaving Scotland. She had neither parents, brothers, nor sisters settled there who could have helped her to make a home for herself near them. Her husband's friends did not seem inclined to give her anything but good advice, and that, though very good in its way, did little towards board and lodging, and rent paying. The finger of Providence really did seem as though

it were pointing the minister's widow towards Ulphusby, and bidding her gather together there such a home as her sad heart could find again upon earth.

All these things Miss Chickory represented in her letter to Marian Govan. And then she began her second stocking, hoping that, before it was finished, things would be in train for the whole family's removal to the quiet little house in Ulphus Court, which she had fixed upon as the most convenient spot in which they could begin their life struggle.

CHAPTER XIV.

SHE was not disappointed. That stocking was destined in its progress to mark the equally successful progress of affairs towards Mrs. Govan's settlement at Ulphusby. By the time Miss Chickory had begun to "narrow for the calf," a letter arrived from Marian, authorising her to take the house in Ulphus Court. Before the heel was "set," the bill was out of the window, and the painters and paperers busily at work from attic to basement; and before the toe was finished, Marian herself had reached the Old Deanery, to superintend the unpacking of furniture, and to make everything

bright and pleasant before Mrs. Govan and Avery, who were visiting some members of the late Mr. Govan's congregation, should come to take possession of their new home.

Marian Govan was one of those quiet, thoughtful girls whose heritage seems to be care for others. Though she was very young, not nineteen yet, she could already look back over a long life of self-denial, beginning from her very earliest childhood, when she used to be summoned from her dolls and playthings to amuse Avery, who was always a noisy, boisterous little fellow, in some far-off corner of the house, or read stories to him in order that his riotous mirthfulness might not disturb their mamma, who was even then so very delicate and ailing. Then, as years passed on, it was Marian whose playtime was interrupted, that she might help her two little brothers, since dead,

with the preparation of their lessons ; for Mr. Govan was always so busy in his study, or visiting the sick members of his congregation, that he had little time left for hearing spelling, or correcting faulty exercises. After that, it was Marian whose closing year of school education was shortened by six months, that Harry might have another session at college ; it would be such an advantage to him, his father and mother thought, all through life, if he could go through the higher classes there ; and a girl's education, they said, was not of so much importance to her, unless, as they hoped Marian would not need to do, she had to gain her living by it. Then again, it was Marian's long looked for visit to a school friend, which was put aside that Harry might go to the coast for change. The holidays were his only chance for getting a little outing, and Marian could visit

her friend at any time. Though somehow, the time never came, or if it did come, some other sacrifice still more pressing came with it, and put it aside. And as Mrs. Govan's health grew more and more fragile, it was Marian who took up one by one the household cares, and tried to keep them from pressing heavily on anyone but herself; and when at last the great stroke came, and the manse home was left fatherless, it was Marian who cheered them all, who kept back her own tears that she might stay theirs, Marian who, when they had buried their dead out of their sight, sought another home, and made it ready for them, and who, that her mother's life might be kept restful, and her brother's be free to go on in the channel he had chosen for it, prepared to spend now in patient daily toil those years, in which, if a woman is to have any sunshine at

all, she naturally looks for it to come to her.

There are many such daughters as Marian Govan in the world, doing their work as quietly, with as little praise as it had been her lot to win. They are to be found in widowed homes, from which morning by morning they set out for their daily stint of teaching, and to which, night after night, they come back weary enough perhaps, but still with a cheerful face and a loving smile for the mother who looks for them, as watchers wait for the morning. Or in worse than widowed homes, in homes where the sad-hearted wife sits weeping for the love that will never come again, or where the reckless ways of some undutiful son are bringing her who bore him, too early to her grave. And the world takes little heed of them, for the work they do is not heroic, not such as can be greatly spoken of and loudly praised. But

wherever such a one is found, the good God looks upon her with his most loving tenderness; and the holy angels, if they cannot always keep her eyes from tears, will keep her feet from falling, and will lead her at last, nobly conquering and gloriously crowned, to her place in that upper world, where she will no longer minister, but be ministered unto.

Ulphus Court, where Marian had prepared a home for her mother and brother, was a very quiet spot. It had once been part of the buildings connected with the Cathedral, and was used as a residence by the ecclesiastical dignitaries; but failing of late years to meet their requirements, it had been converted into separate dwelling-houses, and was now occupied chiefly by decayed gentlewomen who were fond of retirement.

It was built in the form of a quadrangle, with

a covered arcade round the interior, like the college buildings, darkening the lower rooms very much, but making a pleasant sheltered walk for the elderly ladies in rainy weather. When the sun shone, they could step out of their upper windows and walk on the top of it, which was ornamented in spring and summer time with quite an imposing little array of flowers and creepers. A fine old archway led into the court, surmounted by a statue of St. Ulphus, the patron saint of the Cathedral; and here and there, over the massive doors and oriel windows, quaint old heads were sculptured, or coats of arms belonging to the noble families who had once inhabited the place. The rooms were mostly wainscotted, small, but very lofty, and with fragments of oak carving still remaining about them. In the midst of the quadrangle was a square grass plot, with two scraggy

old elm-trees upon it, and the back windows of that side on which Mrs. Govan's rooms were situated, were almost darkened by the Cathedral front, so closely had the Deans and Canons and Archdeacons of former centuries nestled to the fountain-head of their dignity.

Not much sunshine reached the place, except at noonday, when it slanted down over the lichen-stained roofs, and lighted up for an hour or two the dim, quiet little rooms. Very early in the afternoon all was shadowy again, until, in summer time, just before the sunset, a lingering flash of red and crimson, reflected from one of the Minster windows, used to strike into Marian's chamber, and fulfil to any one watching there, the olden promise that at evening time there should be light.

It was late in November before the house was quite finished. Aunt Phillis had been almost

as busy as Marian in getting everything into order; and Roda, too, had lent a helping hand when such finishing touches as she could manage were ready to be put in. Marian arranged everything as nearly as possible like the Manse home, so that when Mrs. Govan came, the place might not seem strange and unfriendly to her. Only the look-out was so different. Instead of the broad, straight, busy Glasgow street, with its tall grey stone houses reaching up flat after flat, and its stream of busy well-dressed people, and its perpetual hum of restless life, this quiet, secluded quadrangle, into which few but ancient gentlewomen ever came, with its quaint black-timbered arcade, and its mouldering carving, and overhanging mossy eaves, under whose shelter the swallows built and twittered, and its air of almost sacred stillness and repose. Surely a peaceful life might be

lived here, a life which, though shorn henceforth of joy, might be unruffled even to the end by tumult or unrest.

Marian fitted up the pleasantest room in the house for her mother. There was a smaller one near it, which she made as tasteful as she could for Avery, for he always liked to have everything about him dainty and even elegant. Opening out of this was another, where he could be alone when he wished to study. Now that he had really taken up a profession, and meant to earn money by it, if he earned money by anything at all, she was quite sure he would see the need of giving his whole attention to it, and doing something creditable in it. He had the talent, he only wanted the application; or perhaps, Marian thought she ought to say, something to apply himself to. For until a young man really knew what he was going to do, it was

scarcely possible to put out any power of application which might be in him. Then there were two other little rooms, which would do for students—if they were fortunate enough to get students to take them; and besides the general sitting-room, a large one, in which Marian thought, by-and-by, her brother might give music lessons, or which would answer very well for a school-room, in case she succeeded in getting pupils at home.

As soon as she came to the Old Deanery, she had called with Miss Chickory upon Mr. Alison, to make such arrangements as she could with him about Avery, and he was only waiting now for an interview with the young man before finally engaging him as pupil teacher for the chorister boys. With ability and perseverance, Mr. Alison said, there was nothing to prevent him from making a first-

class position in the town very shortly; for being himself an old man, and not caring to work so hard as he used to do, it was scarcely probable that he should continue much longer in his place as Cathedral organist. Indeed, he said that this engaging of an assistant for the training of the choristers was a preparatory step to his retiring from active duty altogether; and if the young man whom he selected showed himself possessed of sufficient energy and steadiness, nothing was more likely than that the Dean and Chapter would elect him to the vacant situation, in which case his fortune would be made for life.

As Marian listened, a vision of brighter days rose before her. She saw the struggles of the next year or two overpassed, her mother placed in a position of ease and comfort again; life for her, if never more the protected, sheltered

thing it used to be, at least peaceful and free from painful care about the future. She could trust to her own efforts to tide them over the first few months of straitened means. After that, all seemed to depend on Avery. If only he would give himself to real hard work, if only he would put out the power that was in him, and use it wisely, all would be well. And for his own sake, and for the mother's, whose pale face saddened them day by day, Marian thought he would. That he should do it for *her* sake, or because she needed any help that he could give, never entered her mind.

CHAPTER XV.

BY the beginning of December, the Govan family were fairly settled at Number 3, Ulphus Court. They had met with two model divinity students to lodge with them, young men who seemed likely to give them very little trouble, and who paid them as much as covered the rent of the house, so that care was off Marian's mind. She should be able to encounter the landlord, now, with an untroubled conscience, when rent day came round.

Avery had obtained the situation under Mr. Alison, though with no salary for the first

year, the instruction which he received being a full equivalent as yet for any assistance which he could render to his employer. He was to have a small sum the second year, and then an increase half-yearly, so long as the engagement between them continued.

Avery was a bright, clever young man, and had an undeniable taste for his profession. Perhaps the only, or, at any rate, the chief danger was, that he should not bring sufficient application to it. For he was one of those characters that require a steady controlling hand upon them, to prevent them from starting aside, or turning back in the race of life. There was much in him to bring out, if only he could be made to feel the necessity of bringing it out. And with no strong overmastering will to keep him in a given course, to say to him, with resistless authority, when perseverance

failed—Go on,—the native instability and love of ease which were inherent in him, might become too strong for the control which no authoritative hand, save duty and conscience, laid upon him now.

Perhaps, too, there was another danger, and that was the gay company into which the exercise of his profession might lead him. However, in a place like Ulphusby he was as far removed from temptation, and from improper associates, as any young man could well be. And with the guard of home, a mother's and a sister's love around him, and with the holy motive of duty to them, care for them, which should ever stimulate him, it was to be hoped, nay, it might reasonably be expected, that he would pass safely through the shoals and quicksands of early manhood, and so win for himself, and, winning for himself, win for those also

whom it was his place now to protect and cherish, a good and honourable position in life.

Marian only wanted a few pupils now to occupy her morning hours. But these were more difficult to meet with than either she or Miss Chickory had expected. As soon as she learned that the Govans were really coming to Ulphusby, and that Marian wished for daily teaching, Miss Chickory had gone about amongst such of her friends as she thought would be likely to supply pupils; and first of all to Mrs. Dexter, who lived at St Ninian's Lodge, at the north end of the Minster Close, and whose patronage, if it could be secured, would give Miss Govan a position at once amongst the upper-class families of the place.

Mrs. Dexter had three children, two girls, and a little boy too young as yet to be sent to the

Grammar School; and she had asked Miss Chickory, only a few weeks before, if that lady could recommend to her a suitable young person of refined manners and genteel connections, who would be willing, for a not exorbitant salary, to impart the rudiments of a sound English education to these, the sole remaining treasures, as she pathetically remarked, of her shattered life.

For a not exorbitant salary. Mrs. Dexter was explicit on that head. For, as she explained to Miss Chickory in introducing the subject of the governess, the maintenance of her position amongst the Close families, and her efforts to sustain that appearance which her dear husband, the late lamented Canon, had always wished her to keep up as a person of consideration in ecclesiastical circles, entailed so much expense, and made so large a demand upon her re-

sources, that really she did not feel herself justified in spending more than was absolutely needful upon her children whilst they were so young. Of course, when the time came that they needed to be prepared for their introduction to society, and qualified to take a good standing there, she should feel bound to make increased sacrifices, and retrench in various ways so as to afford them the advantages of a year or two at a first-rate finishing establishment. Girls who had been to a school of that kind, she said, always got settled so much more brilliantly in life, and it would be so very important to the dear children as they grew up that they should settle early and advantageously. She thought a little expense saved now in their education would be laid out to so much more purpose then, when they were really able to appreciate the benefits which a twelve months'

residence in town amongst really stylish girls would give them; and therefore she did not intend to lay out more at present than was absolutely needful.

In fact, as Mrs. Dexter said when discussing the subject, the children scarcely needed any teaching at all. It was simply for the sake of getting them into habits of order and application that she required a governess now. Nothing advanced, nothing for which more than very moderate remuneration could be expected. A cultivated accent, and perfectly lady-like manners,—she must say she was very particular about accent and manners, they were so exceedingly important to children,—and a slight acquaintance with French and Music, just to save trouble to the masters when the girls began to take regular lessons; and perhaps a little Latin, a very rudimentary knowledge of

it, for the little boy who would have to go to the Grammar School by-and-by, and elementary drawing, and a good style in dancing and deportment—this was really all she required at present; nothing more than this. And she had no doubt that many girls who were intending to take up teaching as a profession, would be thankful to give her their services for twelvemonths, merely for the sake of getting a recommendation to another situation. It always helped a girl on so to have been for twelve-months in a thoroughly good family, especially one of the Close families, who were known to be so very particular in the selection of their governesses.

All this, with a great deal more to the same purpose, Mrs. Dexter had said to Miss Chickory a few weeks back, on the occasion of a morning call between the two ladies. Miss Chickory

felt rather doubtful at the time, whether a girl of perfectly ladylike manners and refined accent, and good connections, and even a very moderate acquaintance with French, music, Latin, drawing, and dancing, would be willing to give her services for twelvemonths in consideration of a character to some more lucrative situation ; but thinking that Mrs. Dexter might have found this out for herself, she determined, when she knew Marian's intentions, to try at St. Ninian's Lodge first.

Mrs. Dexter had not met with anyone qualified to give the instruction she required, and therefore was quite ready to hear what Miss Chickory might have to advance in favour of her young friend. She should be so delighted, she said, to meet with anyone. The dear children were getting a frightful accent, in consequence of being so much with the nurses,

and it was a nuisance always having them about her in the drawing-room. Indeed, her nerves were not equal to it, for little Percy was so exceedingly boisterous and self-willed, and Blanche and Minna did not seem to have the slightest of idea of doing as they were bid ; it was really lamentable how nurses mis-managed the tempers and dispositions of children, they had so little notion of moral influence, or anything of that sort. And therefore she should be so thankful to hear of a young person whom she could trust to form their characters, and instil right principles into them, in addition to the trifling accomplishments she had named before.

Miss Chickory, knowing the Ulphusby weakness for good connections, thought she should succeed best in Marian's behalf, by setting Mrs. Dexter's mind at rest on that most important

point. And therefore she stated, in the first place, as a foundation upon which all other qualifications might safely repose, that Miss Govan was the daughter of a late minister of the U. P. church.

“Oh! I am so delighted. A clergyman’s daughter; then of course her accent, and manners, and everything else will be unexceptionable. I always feel that I am perfectly safe when I venture upon anyone whose intimate connections have belonged to the Church. But, my dear Miss Chickory, *Ewpie*, I really don’t recollect a parish of that name in this vicinity.”

And Mrs. Dexter put the end of her jewelled pencil-case to her lips. She had been noting the number of the Ulphus Court house in her tablets.

“Not in this vicinity, dear Miss Chickory.

But I dare say there are shoals of villages in the diocese that I have never so much as heard of. The poor dear Canon would have known all about it, no doubt. He had such an excellent memory for everything connected with the diocese; and now I come to think about it, I have heard him mention the parish of Upie, or some such name. One of those out-of-the-way villages on the Ulphusby moors, I believe. Most trying places, are they not, dear Miss Chickory, for a clergyman, especially if he has grown-up daughters; for how they are to be introduced to society when the time comes for them to be settled in life, I really cannot understand. Clergymen with grown-up daughters ought *not* to be appointed to those wretched moorland parishes. At least, they ought not, for the sake of their families, to accept the nomination.

“Oh! no, no, Mrs. Dexter,” and Miss Chickory hastened to the rescue with rather a humorous smile upon her kind old face. “You have misunderstood me. I said he was a minister amongst the *U. P.’s*, not a moorland parish at all; the *U. P.’s*, you know, one of the——”

“Oh! yes, I understand now, dear Miss Chickory, of course. How stupid of me not to catch the name before; but as you did not mention his being a missionary, I took it for granted that he belonged to a home diocese. The Youpees. Ah! yes, that alters the case altogether. That tribe in Central Africa—I recollect perfectly well. Wasn’t it Dr. Livingstone who did so much for them, found them out, in fact, and induced our Propagation Society to send a missionary to them? Poor benighted things; cannibals, or something of that sort, I believe.

It does astonish me, sometimes, how a person of gentlemanly habits and feelings—as, of course, all our clergymen are—can bring himself to venture into the midst of such a set of barbarians. Their manners and customs must be so very dreadful. But, my dear Miss Chickory, if the young lady's father was amongst the Youpees for so many years, I—I, excuse me, but I don't see how her manners could be *perfectly* correct and refined, and her accent unexceptionable. Entire barbarians, you see, and no decent English society within reach."

"Oh! excuse me, Mrs. Dexter, but you have mis——"

"Oh! I have mistaken the situation, have I? A few English families within reach. Well, then, in that case, possibly, if her parents were sufficiently careful, she might be kept from contaminating influences, poor thing! Yet still

I can't exactly,—you understand, dear Miss Chickory, I can't *exactly* like the idea of her being brought up amongst the Youpees. Because, you know, although she might not have imbibed any improper accent from them, still her manners, I should imagine, could not have that finish and perfect elegance which I should wish in any young person who had the charge of my dear children. Manners, you know, Miss Chickory, manners and deportment are so *very* essential in any one who undertakes the education of the young."

Whereupon Miss Chickory was obliged to explain that the "tribe" in question was not in any way connected with Dr. Livingstone's researches into Central Africa, but that U. P. was an appellation adopted for the sake of brevity, to designate the United Presbyterians, an exceedingly intelligent and influential body

of Scottish Christians, who, in consequence of some difference of opinion on questions of religious government, had seceded, many years ago, from the National Church, and now held a position in Scotland somewhat analogous to that occupied by the English Nonconformists.

At the mention of this last word, Mrs. Dexter's countenance underwent a change, from gentle doubt to unmitigated horror. To have the rudiments of a sound English education instilled into her children's minds by a young lady from the Ulphusby Moors, or by a clergyman's daughter who had been brought up in close proximity to one of the most barbarous tribes of Central Africa, was a legitimate and even most desirable state of things, compared with that which Miss Chickory had suggested by the mere naming of the word Nonconformity. Mrs. Dexter started back, and put out her

hand in mute, wondering deprecation, being unable, for a few seconds, to find any other manner of expressing her surprise.

At last she said—

“Why, then, my dear Miss Chickory, she is a Dissenter! She is a *Dissenter*, my dear Miss Chickory!”

Miss Chickory was compelled to acknowledge that Marian Govan did belong to the outer court of the Gentiles. Until now it had never occurred to her that such a position could render her unfit for the sacred office of training Mrs. Dexter's youthful family in the rudimentary accomplishments, and possibly instilling into them at the same time some more Scriptural notions of obedience and self-restraint than, according to their mamma's own showing, they at present possessed. In vain she assured the startled lady that Miss Govan's accent was

refined to perfection. Nowhere was the English language so beautifully spoken as in some of the northern districts of Scotland; even the most educated English people acknowledged that. In vain she affirmed her manners to be perfectly ladylike, and her connections irreproachable, and her acquaintance with the required accomplishments, except, perhaps, dancing and Latin, abundantly equal to the exigencies of the case. Mrs. Dexter was immovable. The stigma of Nonconformity was one impossible to be set aside by any merely intellectual or social qualifications. In every other respect the young person,—Mrs. Dexter could scarcely call her a lady now,—appeared to be very desirable, and doubtless being in straitened circumstances, and wishing to establish for herself a position in Ulphusby, would not be foolishly grasping in the matter of salary. But Mrs.

Dexter thought she should scarcely be justified in venturing upon a Dissenter. It would be so dangerous for the dear children. Youthful minds were so easily contaminated, and she should never be able to forgive herself if dear Blanche and Minna imbibed anything of that kind. It would be worse, or certainly far more prejudicial to their future position in life, than any trifling tendencies in the other direction, which they might acquire at the Parisian finishing establishment, to which she hoped to be able to send them in the course of a few years.

And then Miss Chickory must not think her unkind, nothing was farther from her intentions than anything of the sort; indeed, she had no patience with those people who were always crying out against Ritualism and that kind of thing, simply because they could see no good except in their own circumscribed little opin-

ious ; but she did hope Miss Chickory would not ask her to recommend the case amongst her friends. It was a very painful case, no doubt. Of course, whenever the father of a family was removed, things were very different, unless the widow had a handsome income to fall back upon ; but she could not conscientiously recommend a young person of that kind to the care of children, unless a considerable change passed over her religious opinions.

“ Which I hope, dear Miss Chickory, is by no means impossible in the present instance.” And Mrs. Dexter quite brightened up at the idea of Marian Govan quitting the outer court of the Gentiles for the more select society of the worshippers in the temple proper, and thereby rendering herself eligible to the instructorship of Blanche and Minna, at a judiciously moderate salary. “ Of course, if she could be prevailed

upon to renounce her adherence to the—the—
dear me, what was the name you mentioned?
—I really never trouble myself to inquire into
these schismatics, you know—and professed
herself a member of the Establishment, I should
be very glad to use my influence in her behalf.
And, indeed, I think I might go so far as to
say that I should not hesitate, under proper re-
strictions, to commit my own children to her
charge, her accent and manners being, as you
say, irreproachable, and her acquaintance with
the minor accomplishments equal to my require-
ments. Could you not, dear Miss Chickory,
suggest to her the advisability of such a course,
especially in a place like *Ulphusby*, where
opinions of that kind are so insuperable a barrier
to anything like a position?"

Mrs. Dexter's advertisement in the *Ulphusby Gazette* for a lady of distinguished manners and

refined accent, with its postscript, "A member of the Establishment required," had been now for two months unsuccessful; women of the qualifications she desired not being willing to impart them to the little Dexters for a nominal salary, or a recommendation to something more lucrative at the end of twelve months. And the Canon's widow began to think that perhaps that concluding clause about the Establishment might be relaxed from necessity to desirability, particularly in the case of Miss Govan, whose straitened position, almost driving her to employment of some kind, rendered her an unusually economical investment in the educational line.

But, of course, it would not do to appear over-anxious, or to let Miss Chickory suspect that she was willing to engage Miss Govan, supposing that young lady were willing to relinquish

her Gentile prejudices, out of anything but the largest-hearted charity, generously setting aside her own private scruples for the sake of helping the poor girl to establish a position for herself. As she had hinted before, there were doubtless many young ladies, though none of them had replied to her advertisement yet, who would be willing to give twelve months' instruction for the honour of being employed in one of the Close families; and therefore it could not be other than the purest generosity on her part to offer that privilege, and with it such a salary as she might be induced to name to a young person who had her way to make, as it were, from the beginning, and who ought, therefore, to be abundantly grateful to any one who was willing to give her the opportunity of establishing it so successfully.

So with the air of a person who leads her

own private interests to martyrdom for the sake of the public good, Mrs. Dexter intimated to Miss Chickory her readiness to consider what could be done for the young person, and then took her leave, secretly congratulating herself on the admirable bargain she was about to make.

But it so happened that Mr. Alison, the Cathedral organist, called at the Old Deanery that very evening to make some further arrangements with Miss Govan about her brother Avery, and finding that she was in quest of pupils, engaged her there and then to teach the two little orphan grandchildren who lived with him, for a few hours daily; proposing, at the same time, a much more liberal remuneration than Mrs. Dexter could have thought herself justified, under the circumstances, in offering. He added, moreover, that if Miss Govan pre-

ferred it, they could come to her own house, and that if she liked to take other pupils, he should not only be willing for her to do so, but would use his influence in procuring them for her.

Accordingly, when, in the course of a few days, Mrs. Dexter wrote a very patronising note to the Old Deanery, requesting that the young person who had been mentioned as wanting employment might wait upon her at St. Ninian's Lodge between the hours of twelve and one that day, she was informed that Miss Govan had made arrangements for receiving pupils at her own house, and was therefore no longer open to negotiations for a private engagement,—an announcement which somewhat mystified the Canon's widow, who was not accustomed to have her patronage disposed of so cavalierly. However, she made the best of

her disappointment, and did perhaps the most sensible thing which, under the circumstances, could have been done ; for, not receiving any more responses to her liberal offer in the *Ulphusby Gazette*, she committed the three little representatives of deceased canonical dignity, Blanche, Minna, and Percy, to such instruction in accent, manners, and the minor accomplishments, as could be imparted to them at No. 3, Ulphus Court, trusting to home influence, and the religious instructions of their uncle, the Rev. Marcus Fabian, to counteract any heterodox tendencies which they might unconsciously imbibe along with these needful secularities.

So that at last, after much anxiety and many cares, Marian Govan found within her reach the means of obtaining a respectable livelihood,—found it, too, without having to be frequently away from her widowed mother, whose failing

health seemed to make Marian's daughterly care and tenderness more needful than ever. She might have to work hard, but that was no new thing for her; she had learned long ago that life was given for action, not for rest. If only Avery would learn the same wise lesson, and put it into practice too, all would be well. And when she looked at their mother's patient face, paling day by day, and thought how much diligence of his might brighten it, she felt sure that no other spur could be needed to make him take the place which that far-off, scarcely green grave, in the busy city of Glasgow, had left for him to fill.

CHAPTER XVI.

AND what of Roda, who has had Alec Ianson's little spray of Virginian creeper hidden away under lock and key in her writing-desk for more than three months?

Roda passed through her first great trouble—the going away of Alec Ianson—very quietly, saying nothing about it to anyone. All great troubles, however and whenever they come, have to be so passed through. For the most part, it is only little griefs that people bewail very loudly, calling in their friends and neighbours to make lamentation with them. The iron which enters into the soul, enters into it

silently, and when it is withdrawn, few know of the wound that is left behind.

Of course, Alec's departure made a great difference at the Old Deanery, for he was so thoroughly happy and good-tempered. Whatever happened, he had always a bright smile and a cheerful look and a kind word for everyone. Old Fits, who sorely missed his daily chat with young Master Alec among the flower-beds, used to complain that the place did not seem like itself now that he was away; and Aunt Phillis said that if he had been her own boy, she could not have parted with him more unwillingly, or thought about him more lovingly, or looked forward with more pleasure to his coming back from Frankfort, and settling down with them for a whole year, whilst he was going through the College classes.

Roda shared in the generally expressed regret.

She was always ready with an unqualified assent when Aunt Phillis said—and she very often did say it—that the house was so quiet, and that nothing seemed half so bright and pleasant now Alec was gone; and that certainly it did make a wonderful difference when any one who had been staying in the house for nearly two months, went away almost at a moment's notice, without giving any one time to get ready for his loss.

But though Roda always used to say, “Yes, Aunt Phillis, I am sure we do miss him very much,” when Miss Chickory mourned over the unwonted quiet of the house, and though she sympathised cordially with Fits in the loneliness of his gardening operations now, yet she never told any one, nor sometimes did she even care to acknowledge to herself, the great, great blank which Alec's going away had made in her life. Only the thought of him lay far down

now in her young heart, tinging all its thoughts, sometimes taking the bright glow of hope, as she looked away to the time when he should come back again ; sometimes the leaden hue of listless weariness, when the days dragged along so slowly without him, and there seemed to be neither spring nor interest in anything she did ; sometimes the mingled sadness and sweetness of that vague, unformed longing which had come over her since the days of her merry childhood had departed.

For their quick, fanciful changes, Roda's thoughts of Alec were like those brilliant Roman lights one sees in fireworks, changing from depth to depth of intense colour—now golden, now purple, now dazzling crimson, at last bursting into one gorgeous blaze of light which seems to illuminate all the country round. Perhaps, too, after their changing hues had passed away,

these thoughts would kindle together into one fair and brilliant light, illuminating the whole wide circle of her life, not for a moment only, then to fade into gloom again, but giving to it a glory which should go out no more for ever.

Roda never went back again to the happy carelessness of her childhood. The days were quite passed now when that old house and garden held all she needed to make her life content. It was as when people travel into foreign lands, and see the golden sunsets, and the purple mountains, and the many-tinted flowers, and the rainbow-winged birds of Eastern climes, and then come home again to their own native village, which once seemed so great, so beautiful, so wondrous. Its beauty is all gone now ; it is no more a wonder to them ; there is no charm any longer in the little wimpling stream, which used to seem so broad ; nor in the

level hedgerows, where once the wild flowers bloomed so brightly, and the robins twittered forth a song, than which no sweeter could be heard. The life that is lived in those little cottages, though once the limit of all their longings, is too narrow for them now, it can never content them any more. They may return to look upon it sometimes with wistful, longing tenderness, but to live it again—never; it can never belong to them now, as it did in the days of their childhood. Roda scarcely knew it as yet, but she had been into the fairy land of love, and whoso treads that country, comes back again no more for rest, and quiet, and content, to the level plains, and colder skies, and unsunned valleys, wherein once so quiet a life was lived.

She did not fret her time away, though, in idle discontent. That one great burst of grief

over, the bitterness of parting past, she dried up her tears, and was just as happy, for anything Aunt Phillis and Dr. Montagu could tell, as she used to be before Alec Ianson came to the Old Deanery. Indeed, Aunt Phillis said the change that had come over her—though she, dear unsuspecting old lady, little knew why it had come—was decidedly a change for the better. For, as she had sometimes remarked to Dr. Montagu, Roda's very great flow of life and spirits was becoming almost too uncontrollable for a girl of sixteen. All that bounding vivacity was very well for a child, and she hoped that Roda would carry a fair share of it into the years of her coming womanhood; but life at sixteen should not be entirely spent in romping and scampering up and down the garden, and reading amusing books, and teaching Jeff and Lily to play tricks with balls and bits of string.

If she feared anything for Roda, it was lest she should be a child too long—lest the cares and responsibilities of life should come upon her too suddenly—before she had yet taught herself to look seriously at them, or prepare to bear them with fitting propriety.

For Aunt Phillis was conscious, though she did not say much about it, that the years were taking away her own strength. She would not be able to trot about the house much longer, and busy herself over Dr. Montagu's domestic comforts, and see that his home was made pleasant and attractive for him, so that he need not leave it to seek a well-spread table and a cheerful fireside elsewhere. And she sometimes feared that Roda's gay, careless disposition, might cause her ere long to strike upon that rock which had proved so fatal to her poor mother's peace—incapacity for efficient

household management, and an inability to make Dr. Montagu's home so agreeable to him, that he should not need to supplement its deficiencies by seeking comfort abroad.

So she welcomed Roda's new quietness with great satisfaction. She fancied she saw in it that ripening and maturing of character which would make her by-and-by so much more valuable a member of society, which would give her so much more influence both at home and abroad, and fit her to supply, or perhaps much more than supply, what her own failing health and strength would soon keep her from giving. She did not know that Roda's life had only gathered itself from without that it might live more intensely within, that all the impetuosity, and eagerness, and energy that used to be expended in childish sport and frolic, had been called in now, and were still at work

vigorously as ever, only where she could no longer take knowledge of their working.

In due time there came a letter from Alec to tell them of his safe arrival at Frankfort, and the kind of life he was living there. It was rather a down-hearted letter for such a merry fellow as Alec, who was generally so full of fun and nonsense, that he could scarcely restrain himself enough to say what he had to say in plain English, but must needs dress it up in all sorts of queer fanciful conceits. There was a touch of home-longing in this letter, or, rather, not of home-longing, but longing for the Old Deanery, at Ulphusby, with its pleasant memories—its home-like rest and quietness. He said how much he missed them all—how often he thought of them, and the happy hours he had spent in that dear old garden, close by the grey towers of the Minster, within hearing of its

organ music. He often shut his eyes, he said, and fancied himself there again, walking with Roda under the elm-trees, or playing chess with Dr. Montagu in the study, or having a long cosy chat with Aunt Phillis over her knitting, as they used to have in an evening sometimes, when the Doctor was taking his nap; but when he opened them, he only saw the four bare walls of his study, and the dry French and German books lying about, and perhaps a half-finished exercise, which he had to toil at to get it finished for the professor next day. Then he told them all about his classes, and his work, and how he meant to fag very hard for the next year and a half, so that he might bring back a first-rate character with him when he came to Ulphusby, to study in the College there. Only it was so dreary to have no one to talk to—nothing but work,

work, work, from morning to night, and never a bright little smiling face to cheer him up, or anyone to say a kindly word to him. He would give almost anything, he said, for just one day at the Old Deanery again, with Roda to join him in a scamper round the garden, or sing some of those sweet English songs to him.

And then he asked after Roda, and sent his love to her—if it was proper for her to accept such a gift from him. However, whether she took it or not, there it was for her. And he even sent his remembrances to Fits, with an assurance that he very much missed his daily morning portion of chat amongst the spinach and asparagus beds, and would gladly exchange a week of their cleverest professor's lectures for one of the old man's dissertations on garden philosophy.

“Bless him! it’s just like the dear young master, it is,” said Fits, when Roda ran into the garden to read him the message. “Law, Miss, it’s first time any gentleman ever thought on to send *me* a message, it is. I worked nigh hand thirty year, man an’ boy, for the quality as lived here afore your pa comed to the place, and when the young gentlemen went away to get their larning in furrin’ parts, they never sent me no message, not they, no more nor if I’d been one o’ the ould elm-trees in the garden. But folks is different, Miss Roda, that’s just where it is—folks is different. You can no more put a bit o’ natur’ into some on ’em, than you could make them there shrivelled bean-stalks as I raked up into a heap yesterday for kindling, put out a fresh lot o’ leaves and blossoms, and do a bit more good in the world. It isn’t in ’em to do it, if they tried ever so. It’s a rare gift, Miss

Roda, is a free sperit like young Mr. Alec's—it makes a body as happy as the day is long. I'se warrant young master, bless him! is as blithe as a cricket out yonder in them there furrin' parts, where he's gone to make a man of hisself."

"Oh! no, Fits, he isn't," said Roda; and she felt rather glad in her heart of hearts that she had it to say of him. "He says he isn't at all happy just now. He is very lonely; he says he never was so lonely in all his life before."

"Lonely!—blessings on you, Miss Roda, folks has all got to be lonely one time or another, if they're ever to come out good for anything. They're just like trees in a plantation, is the most o' men and women; they run up spindly and poor if you keep 'em over rank together, and don't put out no branches worth speakin' on. If you want a real good tree, Miss Roda,

you must have it took out from among the rest, and fix it somewheres where it don't get nothin' but air and sunshine round about it, and then it pushes up an' pushes out, same as it couldn't get the chance to do while all the t'others was round about, until the birds o' the air comes and builds their nests in it, accordin' to the Scribes; and there's a shelter under it for anyone as wants to sit down an' have a bit o' rest. And that's the way, Miss Roda, as the great gardener up yonder does wi' folks as he wants to make summut of. He picks 'em out from among t' rest, and sets 'em out by themselves, where they've got a chance to grow and broaden. Maybe they don't like it at first, for it's human natur' to want to cling together, like trees in a plantin', but they'd never come to no good if they was let to do that all the time, and so they must just be riz up and took away and left to

do for themselves a bit, while they get strong and sappy, and a fair piece of root to 'em, so as they can hold theirselves steady when a bit o' wind happens to blow. And it strikes me, Miss Roda, Mr. Alec's getting that sort o' thing done to him out yonder."

"Perhaps he is," said Roda, still trying to seem as if it was of no consequence to her whether it was so or not. "But I hope I shall never have to be taken up in that sort of way and put anywhere by myself to get strong, for I'm sure I shouldn't like it at all. The first wind that came would blow me down altogether, I think, and there would be an end of me."

"Of course there would, Miss Roda," said old Fits, looking from under his rough stubby eyebrows at the fair little girl before him, in all the pride of her young, unspoiled beauty. "I'd like to see what sort of a figure *you'd*

make if you was set out anywhere to take care of yourself. No, no, Miss, you needn't be afraid. You're not ready for that sort o' thing yet, and maybe it won't never have to come to you at all. It isn't everybody as needs to be took out and left to themselves to get strength enough to hold fast, against the storm comes. He's a good Gardener, Miss Roda, that has the care of you and me, and all the rest on us, and He never makes no mistakes with the plants of His setting. He'll none go and deal with a tender little thing like you, as if you had the making of a big tree in you, any more than I should go and scatter them tender little seedling balsams of mine up and down the garden for the wind to tew 'em about, or anything as happened to be stirring; bless 'em poor, little things! they'd be dead and done for in no time. They want setting nigh hand of each other, so as

their bits o' leaves can reach out and touch one another for a bit o' comfort; and when there's an east wind, I haps 'em from it—and when there's a bit o' sun to be got, I lets it come to 'em—and when there's goin' to be rain, I puts a bit o' summut over 'em, so as they shan't get drowned. And do you think, Miss Roda, as the Gardener as does for you an' me 'ull take less care of his little 'uns nor I does for my seedling balsams? No, no, you needn't fear ought coming to you as you won't be able to do with. He'll none take and set *you* out by yourself till your able to bide it, and maybe you're the sort—for there *is* some—that never wants no setting out at all."

Roda thought that was a very comfortable theory, especially for the seedling balsams. But as Fits was sticking his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat, as though he was

meditating more remarks, and as she wanted to go back into the house to see something else that had been sent in the letter, she went away and left him to finish his dissertations at a future opportunity.

The something was Alec's portrait, taken just as she saw him first, in that curious, un-English-looking Canadian dress. He said he got it done in Paris, as he was passing through, when he had no time to do himself up like a gentleman, and so they must excuse the roughness of it; but Roda liked him better in that dress, with the belt and the fur collar, and the queer-shaped cap, than if he had been got up in the grandest turn-out that Paris could produce. There was something in one of the buttonholes of his coat which she could not exactly make out at first; but when she looked more closely at it, she found that it was a little

spray of Virginian creeper, the same that he had gathered that morning as they were walking up and down the long walk for the last time—at least, the last time for a year and a half. That little bit of leaf made her feel very glad. She was quite sure now that he was not intending to forget her, or he would never have put that leaf there to remind her—as of course he knew it must remind her—of what they had been saying to each other when he gathered it. It was worth a whole heap of letters and messages, just that one single spray, which had no meaning for anyone but herself. It seemed to make her heart warm afresh towards him; and she felt as she had never felt before, how very pleasant it is to be cared for and remembered, as Alec must have cared for and remembered her before he would have thought of wearing that spray of Virginian

creeper when he had his photograph taken.

The picture had to be put, with many more, in the grand album on the drawing-room table, where visitors, turning it over from time to time, remarked what a very fine-looking young man Mr. Ianson was, so different to the generality of English people, and especially the people of Ulphusby, who were so very slight and small of stature. They supposed it was the sort of life he had led out there in the far West, which had given him an appearance of manliness beyond his years, for everyone knew there was nothing like hunting, and shooting, and roaming about through the forests, as they understood young Ianson had been accustomed to do, for giving that bronzed, hardy look which *some* people thought was so very handsome.

Roda thought they meant her, when they said "some people" so very expressively, and so she

used to begin to talk about him with a great air of unconcern, as if she did not care the least bit in the world for him. But she took the letter and laid it carefully away in her writing-desk, and many a time, when Aunt Phillis thought she was busy over her favourite story books, it was taken out and read with a bright happy smile. A very happy smile, even though Alec had said in it that he was so very lonely, and had no one out there at Frankfort to speak a kind word to him.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.





UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 042230844